



**AN EXPLORATION OF HOW TEACHERS IN NAMIBIA EXPERIENCE  
AND RESPOND TO THE LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH IN  
THEIR WORKING LIVES**

**BY**

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**A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Doctor of  
Philosophy Degree in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-  
Natal, South Africa**

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**2018**

## DECLARATION

I, Vistorina Vapanawa Ndapandula Ndemuweda, hereby declare that this thesis entitled: **An exploration of how teachers in Namibia experience and respond to the learner-centered approach in their working lives**, submitted for Doctor of Philosophy at University of KwaZulu-Natal is my original work. This work has not been previously submitted in part or its entirety for degree purposes at any other university. Ideas from other authors used in the thesis are acknowledged as per agreement with the principles of the University and the reference list is included.



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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, tate Viljobeam (Uncle Chaka) and meme Ndafuda Mkwangadu Shomongula. With deep gratitude, I thank you for being so generous with your love, wisdom, support and time. I treasure the wonderful, happy memories of my cherished childhood. I am eternally thankful for the values and work ethic you instilled in me, which kept me going on this arduous journey.

I also dedicate this thesis to my children: Tonateni, Penelao, Hidipo, Ndahafa and Ndapandula. Let this work be your inspiring guide to work hard. Follow the footsteps and do not give up.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God the Almighty for being my “shepherd” throughout this long, lonely and laborious journey. This doctoral study would not have been a success without the support and assistance provided by remarkable individuals along the way.

Special gratitude is accorded to my supervisor Dr Nonhlanhla Mthiyane, for her professional guidance, support and encouragement throughout this tough and protracted journey. The input and contribution of Prof. Volker Wedekind is also highly valued. I would like to acknowledge the constant encouragement and concern from my course mate and sister from the other mother Faith Kimathi, and for being a reliable shoulder to lean on during difficult and dark times through my study. Another special thanks also go to Barbara Mutula-Kabange for proofreading and editing this work. Asante sana.

I extend my gratitude to the Ohangwena Education Directorate for granting me permission to undertake this study. I thank all the participant teachers for their esteemed and unselfish willingness to participate in my study. Their enormous contribution, time and effort made this study a reality. This study was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), with the approval of my church the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN); as well as by the University of KwaZulu-Natal through the PhD fee remission. I wholeheartedly acknowledge and appreciate this support.

I am most thankful to my family for all the encouragement, understanding, love, and support throughout this expedition. To my children Tonateni, Penelao, Hidipo, Ndahafa and Ndapandula; I thank you for pulling and pushing me, for being considerate and rendering all the support needed. Hidipo, you have always been my great assistance with all computer hitches and stresses. I do not know what I would have done without you, tangi mshakati! To my girls, thank you for cooking the meals and being in charge especially when I had to be away from home. To my husband and lifetime friend Daniel: Thank you for being there for me all the way long, through all the thick and thin of this journey. You have always believing in me, an amazing pillar of strength who has seen the potential in me that I often fail to see. Ngiyabonga kakhulu.

My genuine appreciation extends to my beloved parents and siblings, friends and well-wishers for their unconditional support and understanding. Tangi komainikano noketwomukumo leni, onda pandula!

## **ABSTRACT**

Teacher sense-making lies at the heart of effective teaching and learning because it influences interpretation of policy reform and how it is implemented. The study explores the experiences and responses of Namibian teachers towards the learner-centered approach which was introduced after independence. The purpose is to understand how teachers interpret and implement the new teaching policy; their coping ways; and why they implemented the policy the way they do.

The study was conducted in Ohangwena, the region located in the northern central part of Namibia. Eight participants from secondary schools were selected for narrative interviews; while nine teachers, three from different secondary schools, were chosen for focus group interviews. The focus was placed on teachers who were educated and trained in the apartheid education system, commenced their teaching career during the same period and went through the major shift to the present post-independence education.

The narrative approach within the qualitative interpretive paradigm was used to explore the experiences and responses of long-serving teachers and how they shaped their individual, professional and social lives. This approach allowed the study to effectively employ the qualitative data collecting techniques such as narrative and focus group interviews; and narrative analysis models to interpret and make sense of data. Three key elements of the integrated cognitive sense-making model by Spillane, Reimer and Reiser (2002) were used as an analytic framework to understand how teachers interpret reforms and why they decide to implement it the way they do. It highlighted that the sense-making process of the implementing teacher was influenced by the individual factors from the teacher persona; school contexts; and nature of policy.

Findings indicate that teachers experience numerous curriculum reforms; however, how they perceive and make sense of them is influenced by a variety of factors which emanate from individual, contextual and policy elements. The study detects that there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and policy demands. It is also evident that many policy demands are not compatible with the school contextual realities. Teacher interpretation of the new teaching policy and the decision making of their behaviour and action on how to implement is intensely influenced by experiences and emotions; and situational conditions at their working places. The findings confirm that aspects from individual, working contexts and policy are very critical in the sense-making and implementation processes. These findings

have implications for all the stakeholders at all education levels, particularly for Professional Development programmes at school and regional levels in assisting teachers to improve their perceptions and beliefs for positive interpretation and acceptance of the new reforms.

**Keywords:** Learner-centered approach; teacher experiences; teacher responses; teacher work life; teacher sense-making; policy implementation.

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## ACRONYMS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| AIDS     | Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome                     |
| BETD     | Basic Education Teacher Diploma                         |
| CBS      | Central Bureau of Statistics                            |
| CCP      | Cluster Centre Principal                                |
| CDM      | Consolidated Diamond Mines                              |
| CPI      | Critical Practitioner Inquiry                           |
| CSR      | Comprehensive School Reforms                            |
| DNEA     | Directorate of National Examinations and Assessment     |
| DPS      | Deputy Permanent Secretary                              |
| ECP      | Education Certificate Primary                           |
| ED. PRIM | Education Diploma Primary                               |
| EFA      | Education for All                                       |
| EMIS     | Education Management Information Systems                |
| ETP      | Education Theory and Practice                           |
| ETSIP    | Education Training Sector Improvement Program           |
| FMS      | Finnish Missionary Society                              |
| HPEC     | Higher Primary Education Certificate                    |
| HIGCSE   | Higher International Certificate of Secondary Education |
| HIV      | Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus                           |
| ICT      | Information and Communication Technology                |
| IGCSE    | International Certificate of Secondary Education        |
| INSET    | In-Service Education and Training                       |
| JSTC     | Junior Secondary Teacher Certificate                    |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| JSC    | Junior Secondary Certificate   |
| JSE    | Junior Secondary Examinations  |
| LCA    | Learner-Centred Approach   |
| LCE    | Learner-Centred Education  |
| LPTC   | Lower Primary Teacher Certificate  |
| MASTEP | Mathematics and Science Teachers' Extension Program                        |
| MBEC   | Ministry of Basic Education and Culture                                    |
| NCS    | National Statement Curriculum  |
| NEC    | National Education Certificate   |
| NESE   | National External School Evaluation  |
| NIED   | National of Educational Development  |
| NSSC   | Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate                                       |
| PQA    | Professional Quality Assurance   |
| PTC    | Primary Teacher Certificate  |
| RCM    | Roman Catholic Mission   |
| RMS    | Rhenish Missionary Society   |
| SADF   | South African Defence Force  |
| SACMEQ | Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring<br>Education Quality |
| SBS    | School-Based Studies   |
| SIDA   | Swedish International Association  |
| SWA    | South West Africa  |
| SWAPO  | South West Africa People Organisation                                      |
| UNAM   | University of Namibia  |
| UNESCO | United nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation           |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund |
| UNIN   | United Nations Institute for Namibia                   |
| UNISA  | University of South Africa                             |
| USAID  | United States Agency International Development         |
| ZP     | Police Zone/ Red Line                                  |



# CHAPTER 1

## SETTING THE SCENE

### 1.1 Introduction

This study explores how teachers in Namibia experience and interpret their working lives in the context of the curriculum policy reform, from a traditional teacher-centered to a modern progressive learner-centered curriculum. It describes and discusses the conflicting aspects within the teacher self, the individual and cultural subjective traits that challenge and underpin their classroom practices. These inside individualities are embedded in teacher experience, identity, beliefs, social and cultural lives and have the potential to inform teacher meaning-making and interpretation of their constantly changing working environments and therefore their practice (Ertmer, 2005). These aspects have the potential to influence and determine the internal tension that teachers experience as they go through the policy change from an old-fashioned traditional to a modern learner-centered curriculum, since they can impact on teacher behaviour, decision-making and practice (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Ertmer, 2005; Pajares, 1992). This tension results in a disparity between the intended and the implemented/actual curriculum due to the way it is interpreted and implemented by teachers. This study exposes deeper underlying issues that may underpin and serve as the root cause of the clash or conflict between teacher identities and the new adopted learner-centered policy. It investigates the factors within teachers' personal, professional, and socio-cultural lives that may hinder effective implementation of the radical, progressive learner-centered education curriculum. This study adopts the definition of the concept 'tension' by Phipps and Borg (2009) as "the extent to which teachers' stated beliefs corresponds with what they do in the classroom" (p. 380), and "a reflection of what they believe" (Goodson, 2008, p. 381). The term tension will be used interchangeably with concepts such as incompatibility, inconsistency and incongruences.

The study focuses primarily on the perceptions and practices of experienced teachers over the past two decades, because these teachers are perceived in this study to have a comprehensive and stretched experience of the radical shift in curriculum policy. The shift is radical because most teachers expected to implement it have been educated and trained in the previous traditional teacher-centered curriculum and many have started their teaching career in the same colonial apartheid era. As Handal and Herrington (2003) state in the case of

Mathematics' educators about reforms, the emotions, beliefs and values of teachers that are opposite to constructivism likely serve as a barrier to enactment of policy changes. Therefore, teachers' experiences of educational backgrounds as learners, student teachers and practice, in combination with their cultural beliefs, norms and habits put them in a good position to inform and make us understand the internal tension they experience due to this drastic and radical learner-centered approach.

The working life of teachers is affected by a various number of dynamics surrounding schools and contexts where they live (Yost & Williamson, 2010). Since change basically causes feelings of discomfort that can be unpleasant and intimidating (Handal & Herrington, 2003, p.62) it is very vital to understand how teachers experience and perceive the learner-centered approach and their work; and how they interpret and negotiate their personal-professional selves, that is, who they are and what they do (Pillay & Saloojee, 2012). As Goodson (2008) attests, the key component of who we are as persons is rooted in our life experiences and backgrounds, lifestyle in and outside school, potential identities and cultures which influence our views on teaching and practice.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Teachers are significant agents of change and key implementers of any educational reform because they play a critical role for the success thereof (Day, 1999; Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). However, the nature of perceptions, knowledge and beliefs teachers possess regarding understanding the reforms are very critical (Bantwini, 2010; Blignaut, 2007; Harney, Lumpe, Czerniak, & Egan, 2002). Knowledge, beliefs and perceptions that teachers hold regarding aspects such as learner-centered policy describe the kind of personal opinions they hold about it, as humans tend to act according to their beliefs and perceptions (Harney et al., 2002). Teacher opinions are embedded in and interpreted on the premise of their past experiences, every day practices and school contexts, that is, on beliefs of what they see works for them. Teaching nowadays has been perceived to be a less rewarded but more controlled and regulated profession guided by competition-oriented education policies and strong hierarchical systems reflecting militaristic practices which undermine teachers' professional judgment and raise feelings of fear and stress (Symeonidis, 2015). Many increasing reforms and changes are constantly undermining, downgrading and neglecting teacher autonomy, deteriorating teacher roles (Webster, 2017), and leading to reduced morale in teachers (Hargreaves, 1994; 2000; Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). It has been observed that the passion,

love and satisfaction of teaching enjoyed by veteran experienced teachers are replaced by increasing resentment about changing working conditions (Tye & O'Brien, 2002; He, Cooper & Tangredi, 2015). According to Tabulawa (1998) and Saultz and Saultz (2017), many new education initiatives aimed to change and improve the education system have been widely promoted but have seldom been perceived through the lens of teachers' lives and work. Instead, they adopt a technicist approach where they mainly address technical issues like lack of resources, poor teacher training and overcrowding classrooms, while they unfortunately overlook and disregard the critical teacher 'voice' and perspectives in the process. They promote more of competitive and individualistic at the expense of collaborative and interactive teaching (Saultz & Saultz, 2017).

A technicist style assumes that teaching is a value and emotional-free professional activity which is not linked to teachers' subjective feelings (Tabulawa, 2013). As a result, problems and complications related to teaching are seen resolvable through demanding techniques of scientific methods. Technicist approaches focus on financial and technical inputs; however, they underestimate the context (Guthrie, 2016; Tabulawa, 2013). On the contrary, many top-down styles used to bring about education changes do not often correspond with many teachers' education and cultural histories, experiences and contexts. This mismatch at times clashes with teachers' beliefs causing the poor implementation of intended reforms or the lack of success thereof (Awe & Kasanda, 2016). In addition, this overlooks teachers' roles and voices in the innovation and development of curricular and teaching strategies aiming for pedagogical change which tend to put teachers in a passive, delivering agent position, leaving them feeling disenfranchised in school discourses, and their power and autonomy undermined. This exercise is seen by many scholars (Buchanan, 2009; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Goodson, 2008; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Tabulawa, 1998; Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Yost & Williamson, 2010) as one of the major contributions to unsatisfactory results, and as a factor that poses negative complications to schooling and to the education system as a whole. This includes teacher attrition and poor student achievement due to stress caused by increased expectations and responsibilities in the profession (He et al., 2015).

Like many contexts in Africa, studies and reports on learner-centered education implementation in Namibian contexts are riddled with accounts of major to minor disappointments and complications (Schweisfurth, 2011; 2013). The problem is said to be originating from individual to contextual circumstances surrounding teachers (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2011; Thompson, 2013) of both teachers and learners.

According to Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) and Schweisfurth (2011), Namibia is not the only country struggling with learner-centered implementation, but many developing sub-Saharan countries like Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and others. The problem is associated with a variety of factors like teacher limited capacity, lack of teachers' personal experiences, high learner-teacher ratios, low classroom resources and teacher cultural perspectives of teaching and learning (Schweisfurth, 2011). Furthermore, it has been reported that the teaching practice of many teachers in Namibian schools still rely heavily on traditional approach to teaching and learning and rarely encourage democratic ways of learning (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009, Awe & Kasanda, 2017) because it is believed they were mostly taught through teacher-centered and didactic lecturing. The University of Namibia (2012) has asserted that apart from learner-centered approach, too many new curriculum changes were introduced to teachers in Namibia as from independence in 1990. These unprecedented changes have created a pedagogic shock in many teachers because they were too quick and have never been experienced in implementing the curriculum in their teaching contexts before. That is, the curriculum is demanding what has not been known and rooted in the history of teachers. On the other hand, teacher educators who are expected to be good role models for teachers in using the learner-centered approach have also been observed not to practice what they preach. They train and educate student teachers to use learner-centered approach, whilst they are doing it in transmissive teacher-centered ways (Nyambe & Wilmot, 2012; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). According to Vavrus et al. (2011), many teacher education programs mainly promote the technical rationality models than the reflective practitioner models where teacher educators do not encourage active participation because they mostly design their classes around lectures and imparting of facts to student teachers. Prospective teachers are not enriched with experience opportunities where they can emulate; thus, when they go for practice, they largely draw from how they were taught which was teacher-centered.

In addition to the studies conducted, the Ministry of Education (2007) in its educational strategic plan, ETSIP, has admitted that the quality of education and that of its products in Namibia after 15 years of learner-centered implementation has not yet been translated into pleasing outcome. This is due to teachers' inability to interpret the learner-centered teaching theory into actual practice in classrooms. This has been testified by the reports of the National External School Evaluation (NESE) reports (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009) that learner-centered approach is not well implemented; classrooms are rather dominated by traditional,

didactic and inefficient teacher-centered approach to teaching and learning. Other activities observed not in line with learner-centeredness include passivity of learners in classroom interactions, negligence of learners' learning styles by teachers, and little or no attention paid to independent and assessment for learning.

This study maintains that listening to teachers' voice which includes their subjective explanations like concerns, wishes and preferences allows them an opportunity to express their feelings, exercise their rights to speak and have their everyday control and independence spoken. When teachers as vital stakeholders in the process of education are heard, their voice is recorded and attended to. Through teacher voice, as Pillay (2003) points out, this study is keen in making visible what has been erased or silenced in understanding what it means to be a teacher and the teaching process. More importantly, teacher voice concept is significant because it talks well to the place and position teachers occupy, and the role they play in school restructure and reform and how well or poorly their perspectives are represented in the discourse of policy and research in education (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 12). Teacher subjectivity involves the feelings and emotions which constitute the essential part of their "internal states" (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). With reference to Leithwood and McAdie (2007), internal states are teachers' feelings and knowledge which include elements like job satisfaction and motivation/morale, stress and burnout, commitment and sense of self-efficacy and they have the capacity to determine teacher thoughts and actions as well as performativity. They can be positively or negatively influenced by teacher working conditions like increased pressures of intensification, and to a large extent serve as determining factors for many experienced teachers to leave or remain in the profession (Tye & O' Brien, 2002). In Namibia, teacher shortage has also become a matter of concern as attested by Namibian Education Ministers, the late Abraham Iyambo (The Namibian, 29 November, 2012) and David Namwandi (New Era, 26 July, 2013). They acknowledged that the country is facing a critical shortage of teachers because about 10% of teachers, mostly the highly qualified in rural and remote areas, are leaving the profession each year to greener pastures resulting from poor and harsh working conditions, lack of accommodation, transport and low salaries. The report of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in Namibia (EMIS, 2008; 2016) also indicates an increasing rate of teacher attrition in Namibian. This shows that there is a need to find out where to and why teachers are leaving the profession. This study is not essentially responding to this call directly; however, it is indirectly contributing to it because it highlights teachers' perceptions and responses to curriculum policy changes which are

perceived as major predicting factors towards teacher attrition and other negative complications.

### 1.3 Research Questions of the Study

The study attempts to answer the following broad question:

❖ ***How does the learner-centered approach in Namibia affect teachers' lives and work?***

To answer the main question above, the following three critical questions were addressed:

- 1) *What are the teachers' experiences of the learner-centred approach?*
- 2) *How do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centred approach?*
- 3) *Why do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centred approach the way they do?*

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to explore what is “inside teachers’ heads” (Tabulawa, 1998, p.252), that is, teachers’ feelings and thoughts emanating from their experiences about the learner-centered policy they encounter after independence. It foregrounds the *terra incognita* voice of teachers which has been reported absent and neglected for long in many teacher research studies conducted earlier than almost two decades ago (Goodson, 2008; Guthrie, 2016; Templer, 2009), and the absence of their direct participation in the decision-making process in issues pertained to their work (Symeonidis, 2015). Herewith the research questions, I present the objectives I intent to achieve for this study.

The overall and broad question of this study: “***How does the learner-centered approach in Namibia affect teachers' lives and work?***” aims to explore teacher experiences, feelings and responses towards the radical learner-centered policy, and to understand how this change has impacted on their working lives. This exploration will help provide a deep insight into teachers’ thoughts and feelings of what they are and what they do, regarding their contexts of work, how they see change in their working conditions and how they internalise and respond to it. The study provides an understanding of teachers’ views of their work and change in their social and cultural worlds, as well as how they make sense of their contexts and practices.

The first critical question: “*What are the teachers’ experiences of the learner-centred approach?*” examines the curriculum changes experienced in the radical shift of the curriculum policy, from traditional conventional teaching to the modern progressive constructivist learner-centered teaching, in recent twenty years. This allows for the identification and understanding of the changes, demands and expectations placed on teachers by the learner-centered curriculum policy adopted in Namibia.

The second critical question: “*How do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centered approach?*” allows the study to examine how teachers cope with the new policy; feelings about their personal, professional, historical and socio-cultural selves; and how they perceive their backgrounds challenged, threatened, changed, constrained or adapted to the new curriculum policy in their working lives. This sheds light in explaining teachers’ views, feelings and knowledge about policy changes they implement as well as reveal the conflicts and tensions arising between their background beliefs and the new policy implemented (Deslandes, Barma & Massé-Morneau, 2016). It will assist in negotiating their interpretation and sense-making of their working lives and how they feel about the impact caused by the curriculum policy as dictated by their individual selves and contextual backgrounds. This study adopts a constructivist view and therefore sees teachers as “active and autonomous agents whose role is shaped by their classroom experiences” (Tabulawa, 2009, p. 252; Thompson, 2013). It also assumes that teachers have thoughts, beliefs, judgments, values and assumptions that give sense to what they ascribe to their daily classroom practices and behaviour. This enables the study to document the voice of teachers, the potential structures from different contextual angles that guide the pedagogic process as determined by their background knowledge, beliefs and experiences in perceiving curriculum policy and shaping their classroom decisions about teaching and learning processes.

The third critical question: “*Why do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centered approach the way they do?*” interrogates the reasons or factors underlying teacher understanding, interpretation and practice of the learner-centered policy the way they do. This is achieved by probing into teachers’ personal, professional and educational backgrounds, as well as their contextual and cultural socializations. This gives insight on how teachers’ personal, contextual, social and cultural backgrounds affect and influence policy sense-making and its practice by teachers. As asserted by some authors, the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum emanate from teachers’ cultural backgrounds, positions and roles they occupy in the society (Hanushek, 2016; Jones, Bradbury & Le Boutilier, 2011;

Schweisfurth, 2013). This knowledge is useful in understanding teacher beliefs and thoughts in interpreting the learner-centered curriculum which subsequently influence their behaviour and actions.

## **1.5 Brief Background and Rationale**

The interest for conducting this study emanates from the researcher's experience as a teacher in three different secondary schools in rural and developing areas in Namibia over a period of more than twenty years. As a Biology and Life Science teacher, the researcher experienced and implemented the learner-centered education policy and many related curriculum changes at school and subject levels. As a crew member she witnessed and observed how teachers, the policy implementers, struggle with the challenges to meet the professional demands and expectations placed on them by the curriculum.

It is evident in the literature review on curriculum reforms that the participation of teachers in the discussion process, their ideas and input are very limited and hardly heard of. Apart from some studies that focus on how teachers implement the curriculum policy in Namibia (Awases, 2015; Awe, 2007; Awe & Kasanda, 2016; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2002; O'Sullivan, 2004b), very few studies so far have been conducted to understand teacher responses on their experiences and engagement with curriculum policy changes. Teacher sense-making, experiences and responses to change are very critical in the reform processes because they are "at the heart of the spectacular lack of success of most social reforms" (Blignaut, 2007, p.50); more especially if teacher beliefs and experiences conflict with anticipated practices. This study is an attempt at documenting the experiences, views and feelings of teachers in response to the curriculum reforms and their working lives. Examining and exploring the tensions between teacher beliefs and practice is of educational value because it exposes conflicting beliefs held by teachers about the policy, whereas the knowledge about underlying reasons for such tensions will illuminate on the actual teaching process as implemented by teachers.

The literature review on teacher working lives provides information about other teachers around the continent and internationally on how they view and perceive themselves, their work and how they respond to curriculum policy change around them. However, very little is known about teachers in Namibia; particularly in rural and developing areas, indicating that this area of teacher personal and professional lives (teacher working lives and identity) and



work conditions has been insufficiently researched in the country. In the context of this study, a developing area refers to a rural community in process of transition from rural to an advanced stage of development mainly in terms of economic and traditional customs and norms. Many economic developments such as companies and factories are established in the area to provide employment and other financial advantages to the local people. A developing area is chiefly characterised by increasing population and shack dwelling as people flock to the area searching for employment.

Hence, there is a need in the Namibian literature to explore who teachers are and what they do, that is, their identities and working worlds in relation to curriculum policy change. This study is an attempt to partially contribute to solving this problem, since it establishes if similar patterns of interpretation and sense-making about teachers' working lives exist in the Namibian context. In addition, it explores if there are local factors that influence the way Namibian teachers might engage in identity formation that is different from other teachers in other African settings (Blignaut, 2007; Tabulawa, 1998; Vavrus, 2009) or elsewhere in the international horizon.

Teaching is considered as a fundamental profession because it lies at the center of change agency in the knowledge-based society and because of this, it is gradually becoming a more complex career that demands the highest professional standards of practice. Teachers, specifically their expertise and competence, are seen as the "midwives" of the knowledge-based society and without them "the future will be malformed and stillborn" (Goodson, 2003, p. ix). This study assumes that "who we think we are influences what we do" (Watson, 2006, p. 510). Who teachers are, depend on the changes and developments they undergo throughout their careers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2007) shaped by interrelationships between personal backgrounds, life experiences and professional knowledge associated with teaching contexts, students, subjects and school climate (Proweller & Mitchener, 2004). However, as core elements of teacher identity, teacher knowledge and feelings are critical in understanding how teachers experience, make sense and respond to curriculum policy. Since "emotions are at the heart of teaching" (Hargreaves, 1998, p.835), it is therefore essential to consider that good teaching does not only require expertise in subject content and pedagogy, but also need to be charged with positive emotions from the side of teachers. This study hopes to develop an awareness in understanding teachers' thinking and emotions that guide their behaviour. This is of vital importance because teachers are major elements in education

in implementing and sustaining initiatives aimed at raising standards and classroom, and retaining high quality teaching (Day, Sammons, & Gu, 2008, p. 330).

Another rationale stems from the understanding that teacher knowledge and emotions which influence interpretation and translation of policy into practice are embedded in the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of their working environments (Vavrus, 2009). Coupled with this idea is the “classroom press” (Blignaut, 2007, p.49) or what O’Sullivan (2002) termed as “*classroot reality*” factors that teachers undergo on daily basis in their teaching experiences like classroom discipline and overcrowding; and the congruency between teacher assumptions and views on knowledge, teaching and learning, content and learners, which are dynamics in teaching; as well as what the policy outlines about these aspects. These have an effect on teachers to see teaching in different ways other than what the policy prescribes due to their personal experiences of the past, school cultural traditions and availability of resources, sense of identification with policy, and the recognition that change is needed. Literature has shown that several studies on learner-centeredness and its implementation have been conducted in the Namibian context. These studies have negotiated on a variety of learner-centered issues, to mention but a few, on conceptualization and interpretation of learner-centeredness (Kasanda et al., 2005; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; O’Sullivan, 2004b); practical guidelines regarding its implementation (Mubita, 1998; Thekwane, 2001); on how teachers in various subjects implement and the extent to which they implement it (Awe, 2007; Iita, 2014; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; O’Sullivan, 2002, 2004b; Van Graan, 1998); critical reflection practice (Luwango, 2008; Zeichner, Amukushu, Katonyala, & Shilamba, 1998); and on how teacher educators interpret and practice it (Nyambe & Wilmot, 2012).

As the case with many contexts in developing sub-Saharan countries, the findings on how learner-centered education is implemented by teachers in Namibia are not different. Here are the findings of some recent studies conducted in the Namibian contexts. O’Sullivan (2002), has explored the role of teachers in the learner-centered education reform process of English Language teaching within the framework of objective and subjective ‘*classroot reality*’ implementation factors. The study has found out that failure to consider teachers’ real working situations in the development of reforms by policy makers has resulted in teachers not successfully implementing the learner-centered education reforms, simply because reforms are too beyond teachers’ professional capacity and comprehension. Another study was conducted by the same researcher, O’Sullivan (2004b), exploring the implementation of

learner-centered approaches by unqualified primary teachers who were undertaking the INSET (In-Service Education and Training) program. The findings however, still indicated that teachers were not implementing the learner-centered approach as they were trained to do in the INSET program due to low professional capacity of teachers, limited resources, cultural factors and learner background.

In a study conducted in a largely rural and developing Omusati region, Awe (2007), has attempted to determine teachers' knowledge and practices of learner-centered methods of teaching Physical Science. The findings have reported that few learner-centered practices have been implemented in classrooms to promote active participation of learners. However, though teachers were reported demonstrating sound knowledge of different learner-centered methods, the report states that due to lack of enough chairs, teaching and learning materials and science equipment indispensable for learner-centered approach, they preferred those that enabled them to retain control over the teaching and learning process and the teacher-centered lecture method. Kapenda (2008) has investigated how Mathematics teachers in a largely urban Khomas region implement learner-centered education. The study indicates that teachers are making a remarkable effort in shifting to learner-centered methods because they are using expository methods more often than lecture and discussion strategies. However, although they are reported trying their level best to implement the learner-centered approach in classrooms, they are facing challenges of lack or insufficient resources, large classes and lack of discipline among learners. Similarly, Mbangula (2010) has investigated the understanding and implementation of learner-centered education of Oshindonga teachers in Oshana region classrooms. She contends that while teachers are trying to implement learner-centered approach, there is a challenge of misconceptions and inconsistencies, that is, some teachers show little understanding and enactment of the learning theory that underpin learner-centered education. This results in inconsistencies; what they profess is not what they practice. Like other earlier studies mentioned, this study also reports challenges and problems hindering the effective implementation of learner-centered education. Although these findings show slight differences that can be attributed to personal and school contexts, they are unique and the bottom-line is that learner-centered education is not effectively implemented and practiced in Namibian classrooms as anticipated due to challenges and problems teachers experience in their "*classroom realities*" (O'Sullivan, 2002).

According to Horn (2009), the power of the philosophy lies in its consistent reasoning, as its accuracy or inaccuracy depends on its underlying beliefs and premises. This gives an

understanding that a theory premised on unrealistic principles can never be successfully implemented. The Namibian National Curriculum for Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2010) asserts that conditions in and around schools and those in society at large are very critical preconditions for successful curriculum and policy implementation; indicating that there should be a congruence in the principles of the borrowed policy and that of the society where it is applied. This study therefore suggests that to understand why learner-centered education proves to be difficult in improving the quality of education and learners' academic performance, there is need to take a closer look at underlying ideas and premises of this adopted policy and determine whether they are at par with the dominant beliefs and trends in our contexts. Dominant ideas, beliefs and trends in societies are cultural, political, economic and social in origin, and therefore greatly influence teacher beliefs, assumptions and ideas about teaching and learning, learners and knowledge.

It is believed that information yielded by this study will illuminate and broaden the understanding of how teachers make sense of their experiences, perceptions and responses towards the curriculum policy changes. According to Blignaut (2007), teacher sense-making for any curriculum change is critical because firstly, curriculum changes as personal and emotional activities may likely create desperate and uncomfortable situations which may bring feelings of uncertainty and humiliation within teachers. Secondly, it helps to understand the vast diversity of school background truths and teachers' daily realities which are seldom reflected. This also includes how teachers' living and working contexts enhance or limit the way they cope with curriculum challenges, demands and expectations. This knowledge may advantage teachers, school managers, parents and all education stakeholders at higher levels to enhance their understanding in what is encompassed in being and teaching in the face of changes. The significance of this study is in its potential to contribute to the Namibian context, and it is hoped that the findings will benefit policy makers, professional development unit, educational institutions and school managers; and subsequently in challenging the stakeholders to foreground and put teachers' voice, thought and emotions at the center of any reform program rather than pushing them to the periphery where they are neglected, muted and disregarded. Consequently, it is hoped that this study contributes to intervention efforts towards peace and constructive harmony between teachers' working lives and the technicist factors. Teacher voice and sense-making of curriculum policy reveal their inner judgments and opinions which create powerful reasoning that explains how policy changes are translated

and implemented, and why such changes are successfully, partially or unsuccessfully attended to by teachers.

## **1.6 Theoretical Frameworks**

The study drew from a sense-making perspective to understand teacher interpretation of the learner-centered curriculum as dictated by their identity, beliefs, emotions, thoughts and contexts which guide their behaviour and actions. According to Weick et al. (2005), sense-making is a process that changes circumstances or events into clear understandable verbal conditions to serve as good starting points of action. They further assert that sense-making is a social process which is linked to the concept of identity. Who teachers think they are as actors or implementers, greatly shapes what they perform and how they interpret; which in turn affects their image to the outsiders and how they are treated. How others treat teachers can either stabilise or destabilise their identity. The identity of teachers is determined by how others such as learners, parents and their supervisors at higher educational administrative levels think of them. Thus, how teachers make sense depends on how they are perceived. The positive the image others have of them, the positive the sense-making process and vice versa. In addition, sense-making as a social process is influenced by social factors such as interactions and encouragement teachers receive from others which is distributed. Sense-making is therefore a theoretical construct that involves the cognitive and social strategies to cope with uncertainty and insecurity. In this study the researcher adopts the understanding of sense-making by Spillane et al. (2002) which highlights sense making as an interplay of the vital roles of individual, social and situated cognition processes of the implementing agent in relation to the reform policy.

## **1.7 Outline of the Study**

The content of this thesis is organised into eight chapters which are as follow:

Chapter 1: Setting the scene. This chapter introduces the study by providing the objectives, a rationale and a brief background of the study. It also presents the critical questions that the study aims to answer and locates it within the Namibian context. The overview of the literature and the brief description of each chapter are also presented respectively.

Chapter 2: Historical-contextual background of the Namibian education system. In this chapter, a brief historical and contextual background of education in Namibia is presented,

highlighting the different phases of education systems Namibian people went through. It also examines the structure of the present education system adopted after independence and the nature of the changes it has undertaken. Finally, the chapter gives an overview of the learner-centered education policy adopted with regard to its goals, principles and critiques.

Chapter 3: An overview of literature. The third chapter provides an outline of literature associated with this study. Literature reviewed includes studies that attempted to understand working lives of teachers and the factors that influence the implementation of the curriculum. The review identifies a variety of factors at personal and contextual levels that impact on teacher interpretation and consequently their behaviour and action in classrooms.

Chapter 4: Theoretical frameworks. The fourth chapter presents a conceptual framework employed in the study to make sense of the findings. It begins by providing the history of education policy implementation and the recent perspectives of the policy implementation relating the sense-making process to curriculum implementation. The chapter provides details of the overarching sense-making theory by Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) and explains how the conceptual lenses of the framework are used to explain the findings.

Chapter 5: Framing the research. The fifth chapter gives a brief outline of the research design and methodology. It discusses the qualitative interpretive paradigm and the narrative approach adopted in this study as well as the justifications for selecting such a design. The chapter presents a detailed discussion of the data collection methods used and a justification for these. It also discusses the selection of study participants along with their brief biographical sketches and histories, the data collection process, the analysis, ethical issues, as well as the limitations and challenges facing the study.

Chapter 6: Teachers' individual sense-making of the learner-centered education. This chapter presents the findings as well as an analysis of teacher sense-making of policy at an individual or personal level. It makes use of the individual sense-making lens to support its claims and assertions that teachers as implementing agents use their personal experiences, beliefs and knowledge to understand and make sense of the policy changes they encounter.

Chapter 7: Teachers' contextual sense-making of the learner-centered education. The chapter provides the findings and analysis of teacher sense-making at a context level. It employs the social, organisational or policy contextual factors to analyse how they shape the implementing agents' sense-making in understanding and implementing policy. It identifies

situational factors that facilitate or constrain teacher interpretations and implementation of policy at schools.

Chapter 8: Discussions of findings and final thoughts. This chapter discusses the findings and final thoughts which reflect on the literature review, research methodology and theoretical frameworks used in the development of the study. It presents the final remarks regarding implications for different stakeholders in education and suggests recommendations for further research and significance of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HISTORICAL-CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE NAMIBIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the brief background history of the conditions and circumstances which the education system in Namibia has passed through, from traditional to its current situation. The knowledge assists us to gain sufficient understanding of the present education and training system existing in Namibia, shed light on the histories of teachers and give explanations behind the interpretations of their working lives in the face of the learner-centered curriculum change. It also discusses the structure and the nature of the policy approved in the post-independence Namibia.

#### **2.2 Phases of Education Structure in Namibia**

The education structure in Namibia has gone through many phases and modifications. These phases include traditional, missionary, German, South African, foreign or liberation struggle and post- independence education. This section discusses the main structures of each education system and the underlying principles behind it. This outline helps broaden the background understanding of the Namibian education contexts and conditions in which teachers in Namibia have been groomed with emphasis on how those under discussion have been educated, trained and worked. Critical circumstances adjacent to each phase enhance the understanding of the originality of teacher stories as framed by their past histories. These play a major role in shaping their personal and educational backgrounds and therefore the rationale behind their interpretations and responses to the curriculum changes they experience in their daily working lives.

##### **2.2.1 Traditional or pre-colonial education**

Traditional education has been the basic and original type of learning which existed long before any modern kind of learning. Although literature about the then South West Africa, presently Namibia, on traditional learning seems to be rare, tales and stories indicate that it has been and is still carried out in cultural communities. Different cultural groups who inhabited the area before colonial demarcations include the Caprivian, the Damara, the Herero, the Himba, the Kavango, the Nama, the Owambo, and the San. As the case with all



traditional African communities, the purpose of traditional education is to prepare young people for life (Mwamwenda, 2004). That is, to pass traditional skills and craft knowledge to an offspring so that they would be able to use it to persist. Persistence refers to perseverance through obtaining food, treating and curing diseases, avoiding dangers and the like to survive. According to Nekhwevha (1999) and O'Sullivan (2004a), the “education content” of traditional education is transmitted in both informal and non-formal settings. However, there are some cultural groups who offer special formal education through initiation rituals of differing lengths of time, ranging from a couple of days to several months. The content covered the attitudes, values, skills, beliefs and behavioural patterns of particular cultural groups to ensure the continuation and maintenance of cultural heritage from one generation to another, and to live in harmony with others. Craft knowledge and skills are passed from parents to offspring directly or indirectly through a variety of both formal and informal activities like observing, doing, storytelling, singing, dancing, playing, apprenticeship and imitation (O'Sullivan, 2004a). Traditional education is perceived as a communal responsibility where all adults particularly the respected, leaders, the knowledgeable and influential entrust all children in their communities regardless whether or not they are their biological parents. This means that any adult can pass any skill or knowledge; therefore, they have the right to discipline and reprimand any child misbehaving.

### **2.2.2 Missionary education**

Missionary education, as the first modern and formal type of education, has been introduced in Namibia by the London Missionary Society as early as 1805 in the southern part of the country. However, the effective operation thereof has actually started in 1842. The leading missionary societies that operated in Namibia include German Rhenish Mission Society that has worked among the Nama, Herero, and Damara people from 1842 in the central part of Namibia; the Finnish Mission Society amongst the Ovawambo people from 1870 in the north-central, and later extended to Kavango in the north-eastern part; and the Catholic missionaries who operated among the Nama from 1888, Herero in 1896 and later in 1910 among the Kavango (Cohen, 1994). However, according to Ilukena (2008), missionary schooling was not a matter of priority but “an afternoon activity aimed at evangelism, basic literacy and numeracy, and some training for the church and/ or practical skills” (p.11).

The basic agenda of foreign White missionaries to “converting” indigenous people has greatly influenced both the content and the teaching-learning process employed. They have

exercised full power and freedom in designing the school curricula and selecting the teaching content, limiting education to mainly evangelism and basic literacy to enable their converts read the Bible on their own. Missionaries therefore have learned local vernacular languages and improved them into written forms, compiled dictionaries and textbooks and translated the Bible into local indigenous languages (Katzao, 1999). There was a considerable similarity in terms of subjects and content, with minor differences depending on types of denominations. The key subjects taught were religion, reading, arithmetic and writing in indigenous languages. Necessary practically-based skills were offered selectively according to gender for example, boys were taught singing, agriculture, trade and handicraft work, while girls were more absorbed into domestic work such as washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning and sewing according to different missionary styles (Cohen, 1994).

Although the missionaries established the first formal schools and basic teacher training centres and thrived well with regard to providing basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills to indigenous people, “there was [still] a vacuum as far as the political, economic and social/cultural development of the people was concerned” (Katzao, 1999, p. 20). Instead of developing people holistically, the education system was emphasising unconditional submission of the indigenous people to their colonial superiors and therefore has created an instrument for controlling ideology (Cohen, 1994; Katzao, 1999). It was intended to tame, convert, ‘Christianise’ and indoctrinate the natives that the presence of colonialism and its associated policies were the will of God (Katzao, 1999; Ralaingita, 2008) according to Romans 13: 1-7 in the Bible. Indigenous people were not necessarily provided with academic learning that would enable them to become effective and expert civilians but were disciplined to be docile and detest their own culture and history so that they could be compliant, prompt, serious, candid, hard-working and sensible half-skilled instruments of their White masters (Harber, 1997). The system aimed to transform cultures and communities by eradicating and downgrading indigenous practices, beliefs and values, by replacing them with western beliefs. Disputatious and challenging individuals were considered as protesters and insurgents with non-Christian conducts that needed to be excommunicated from the Christian fellowship. The missionary understanding and practice of creating Africans to be a subservient labour force in offices and factories has not only been the case in Namibia; it has also been experienced in many African contexts such as Botswana. Coupled with that, as Tabulawa (1997) argues, is the authoritarian instructional style and the inflexible nature of schooling itself. The school programme is featured with harsh strictness such as punctuality,

silent orderly work in groups, obedience to orders, bells and schedules, respect for authority, patience to monotony, boredom, punishment, lack of reward and regular attendance at place of work. In addition, like the Tswana culture, cultural beliefs of many tribes in Namibia do also hold a “deficit-view of the child” (Tabulawa, 1997, p. 195) which perceives that knowledge should be taught to children or young ones by elders and understands that older individuals should rule or instruct how junior individuals should act and behave towards the seniors. These factors have aided the missionary education to uphold authoritarianism, subordination and domination among the Africans. Besides, as the policy of apartheid got more intense, missionary schools contradicting the inferior education as expected but continuing to give quality education that aimed to prepare learners for better life, have been closed by the apartheid government, and some individual missionaries have been declared *persona non grata*; that is, they were ordered to leave the country within 48 hours back to the countries of their nationalities.

### **2.2.3 German colonial education**

The German colonial rule in Namibia started in 1884. The German education system followed the footsteps of the missionaries. In its attempt to guarantee that there is a constant supply of obedient native servants for the Whites, the German education system ensured that natives were provided with inferior education. They continued to provide education that prepared the natives in becoming good semi-skilled labourers and Christians. For the Germans to educate Black Africans, it was a dangerous undertaking and self-suicide because education would fix dangerous ideas of democracy and equality that might create an understanding of their own rights. As Amukugo (cited in Ralaingita, 2008) asserted, any type of education that would “inculcate mischievous and intolerable ideas as democracy, the brotherhood of man . . . human freedom and the like” (p.80) had to be avoided at all cost.

The Germans had created two systems of education namely, White and African-Coloured education systems. White children of settlers in the colony were taught separately and provided with compulsory quality education, by both the colonial government and missionaries with same values as any education in Germany (Cohen, 1994). Children of natives were provided with basic literacy skills and Bible studies purposefully to instil and indoctrinate their minds with inferiority, loyalty and obedience. Main school subjects taught to African boys included German, arithmetic, carpentry and brick-making, while girls were taught home science. These subjects were seen to promote a desired work force for the

increasing population of White settlers. Moreover, the two education systems were characterised by inequalities and imbalances in terms of funding and material provision. For example, in the 1914/1915 an annual amount of DM329 000 was spent on White education in comparison with the DM9 000 allocated to African education (Katzao, 1999, p. 27). This practice testifies that when the German colonial rule ended in Namibia, education had already separated; one for the superior Whites and another for the inferior Blacks and Coloureds.

#### **2.2.4 South African Apartheid education**

When South Africa was given the mandate of trusteeship in 1920 by the League of Nations after the First World War, the education system was already divided, and it was best serving her purpose of apartheid leadership style. Therefore, for the South African government it was not essential to change the divided education system but rather to promote and extend it to higher levels of tribal and ethnic segregation. Education was used as a powerful tool to create the proper gap of inequality between the Whites and Blacks. The South African government continued to strengthen and promote the education quality of the Whites and to further subdivide the African-Coloured education into two; the 'mixed race' or the Coloured, and the 'bantus' or Black education systems. According to Harber (1997), before the National Party came to power in South Africa the administration was more interested in controlling the missionary education than providing itself to the Black Africans. By 1940, only two state schools were built in the whole country, located in the central part with none in the north where the majority of Black Africans live.

The Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953 in South Africa introduced the ideology of apartheid education and reinforced racism and segregation which also extended to SWA/Namibia (Harber, 1997). The Bantu education premised on the philosophy of Christian National Education, aimed to instil pride amongst and aspire the Whites to protect their identity because "God had willed separate nations and peoples, giving each nation and people its special calling, tasks and gifts" (Harber, 1997, p. 116). The Act also reassigned the management and control of Bantu education from provincial administrators and missionaries to the Government of the Union. For White children of 7 to 17 years, education was made compulsory right from the onset of the South African administration in 1920. However, Black education was designed in such a way that their African mother tongues were the medium of instruction, poorly funded, not promoting participation of Black broods in societal roles, indoctrinating National Christian values and principles, and preserving Blacks' cultural

identities. In addition, Black children were recommended, but not compelled to a 4-year education to learn Biblical studies, reading, writing and basic numeracy skills, and colonial languages such as Dutch, English and Afrikaans to communicate with their White masters after schooling. Like their German predecessors, educating Black children and teaching them about world thinking and ideas was considered lethal because in so doing they would be exposed to dangerous ideas of democracy and human rights (Harber, 1997). Based on this understanding, the education curriculum for Black children more or less reflected the previous education systems and was still gender-based. Black children were made to understand that they could not equalise with the Whites and those who understood their rights and fought for it were not considered as suitable candidates for the teaching profession in Bantu education. Most schools were moved from missionary administration to government administration.

The Bantu education system went along with the homeland or Bantustans policy where natives were restricted and bound within their own ethnic living areas. To reinforce a 'divide and rule policy' and to gain total control over the natives, six homelands, later expanded into eleven administrations in the 1980s, with parallel different education administrations were established. Each Bantustan had its own education administration. Parallel systems were created for Bushmen, Caprivian, Coloured, Damara, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Owambo, Rehoboth Basters, Tswana, and White. The Black and Coloured education was placed under direct administration of the Department of Bantu Education of South Africa and large disparity between expenditures for different groups was created and put in place. Furthermore, ethnic groups in Namibia were placed and ranked in social orders of importance of which each tribe was assigned a code that set up individuals' national identity document numbers. For example, the White minority group was accorded a '01' code, whereas the largest Owambo group was conferred the last '11' code after their dates of birth. That is, education resources and materials, qualified teachers and alike were unequally distributed among different groups as per social ranking orders (Ralaingita, 2008). The Black majority was offered education based on racial discrimination that was teacher-centred, behaviourist, positivist, and that emphasised memorisation and punitive discipline (Nekhwevha, 1999, p. 497). The purpose of Bantu education was to maintain and reinforce the social order, to oppress the majority Black and Coloured population, and to supply labour force for White farmers and business people. Pedagogy was a "banking system" marked with traditional didactic strategies of teaching where teachers, the sources of knowledge, transferred it to

silent and passive pupils who were expected to regurgitate in tests and examinations. Chase describes teaching and learning during the apartheid era as follows:

Children are expected to be well-behaved sponges, absorbing the textbook knowledge relayed by the teachers and furthermore to reproduce these facts in examinations. It is not part of the educational philosophy to train these pupils to think by themselves nor to question the teachers (Harber, 1997, p. 118).

The content of education and the education policy were deliberately designed to limit the goals and ambitions of Black pupils to the lowest level within their ethnic groups, and Black education was under resourced and neglected with the spending per capita of R614.94 for the Whites versus R163.00 for Coloureds, Namas and Rehoboth Basters, and the R68.38 for the Blacks in 1975 (Katzao, 1999, p. 36). This inequalities and discrimination about education financing and provision against Africans persisted until independence in 1989. For example, the expenditure per White child was R3 213 in contrast to the R329 for an Owambo child, the largest tribal group in Namibia. According to Harber (1997), from 1971 onwards secondary schools were unbearably challenging the apartheid regime as students and teachers were rejecting the apartheid education through boycotts and strikes. This resulted in ring leaders and whistle-blowers to be arrested and expelled from schools. Terrorising activities that instilled a sense of fear and shock among the Black Namibians were common. Such activities included the presence of many uniformed South African Defence Force (SADF) members in public sectors like schools and hospitals working as teachers and doctors; positioning of army bases close to the boarding secondary schools; parading of dead guerrilla bodies on war tanks; raping of school girls by the army; and beatings, arrests and detentions. These harassments and intimidations resulted in many Namibian students boycotting classes or going into exile.

### **2.2.5 Education during liberation struggle**

The South African apartheid regime in Namibia was severely resisted by the Namibian multitudes in the late 1950s until 1966 when the United Nations cancelled its order through the International Court of Justice by stating the South African occupation of Namibia as illegal. Political conflicts like boycotts, regular arrests, detentions and tortures of natives, mostly in the northern part of the country, by South African army led many Namibians to run away out of the country to join the liberation movement, South West Africa Peoples' Organization (SWAPO), in neighbouring countries like Angola, Tanzania and Zambia. While

in exile, SWAPO established its Department of Education and Culture to provide education to Namibian people who were in exile and to help move the nation towards unity and democracy. While the Bantu education was used by the apartheid regime as a mechanism to foster social inequities, promote fear, discriminations and disparities among different Namibian tribes, the education under SWAPO was however designed as a platform where social change could be spoken out and teachers considered as prospective means of social change (Dahlstrom, Swarts, & Zeichner, 1999). Since SWAPO was recognised by the international community as the official liberation movement for the Namibian people, it has thus gained support to establish its education sector from many world institutions and organisations. These include United Nations, which assisted in the establishment of the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in Lusaka (Zambia) in 1976 where higher education and teacher training have been catered for. Other support was obtained from the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA), the British Overseas Development Network and Umëa University in Sweden. Many students in exile were sent to countries within the continent or overseas for higher education and teacher training where they were exposed to a variety of ideas and practices in education as well as politics.

## **2.2.6 Post-independence education**

At independence the education policy in Namibia was characterised with racial and ethnic segregation, White supremacy, and budgetary harshness and negligence of the majority education with regard to the provision of resources and amenities. The school curriculum was non-contextual and irrelevant, examination-driven, and skill-disoriented, teacher-centred and not meeting the educational needs of the majority population in preparing them for the developing and competitive world. After independence the priority of the newly elected SWAPO government was to unify the fragmented education inherited from the apartheid South African government. The new government has introduced a major reform to the education system as it has advocated and promoted a paradigm shift from ‘elite education’ to the ‘Education for All.’ According to the World Declaration of Education for All of 1990 (Nekhwevha, 1999) ‘education for all’ implies that “education is a fundamental right; it is the key to personal and social improvement; and that basic education should therefore be provided to all” (p.501). In the same line, the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) states that education in Namibia has been considered a basic human right and should be made available to all people. The “Education for All” policy embraces the policy of learner-centred

education which promotes the ideology of mind liberation based on critical thinking and problem-solving as opposed to banking concept of education prevalent in the apartheid system (Nekhwesha, 1999).

According to Ministry of Education and Culture (1993), the Namibian education system is constructed and based on four major goals namely access, equity, quality and democracy. The principle of access allows for capacity expansion in terms of schools and classrooms to ensure that enough room for all Namibian children is available. It also refers to the reduction of limitations and barriers that prevent children from learning and attending school. Equity refers to equality and fairness where children will be treated fairly and not discriminated because of their religious, cultural, economic and racial backgrounds. The education system is aiming to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is achieved by ensuring that teachers are well trained and equipped with expertise and skills needed for nation building. This goes together with the provision of resources and effective supervision. A democratic education encourages active participation, discovery, decision making, respect and trust through clear accountability of stakeholders. For Harber (1997), an ideal democratic citizen does not only acquire values but also personal features like critical thinking, self-confidence, creativity and independence.

### **2.2.7 Teacher education and training**

Like education itself, teacher education and training also started long before independence. In traditional ways of education all parents, adults and elders in communities were entrusted to teach, correct, or even reprimand young ones who were not acting or behaving in acceptable ways as expected by their communities (Cohen, 1994; Ilukena, 2008). According to Lehtonen (1998), the first indigenous assistant teachers were mainly missionary domestics and attendants. Since they were close and could attend school regularly, they acquired basic knowledge in reading, writing and numeracy than those who were distant from missionary centres. They were given basic informal training to be able to assist the missionaries with fundamental teaching duties of reading, writing as well as Bible instruction. However, as the aspiration and the need for indigenous people to be educated was growing, so was the demand and sustainability of teachers constantly increasing. This convinced the mission societies like Rhenish Mission Society, Finnish Mission Society (FMS) and the Roman Catholic Mission to establish indigenous teacher training centres. The first elementary teacher training institution was established in the south-west of the country by the Rhenish Mission



Society (RMS) at Otjimbingwe in the 1860s and was later moved to Okahandja (mid-part of the country) in the 1890s. The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) opened the training institution for the Blacks at Döbra in 1925, while in the northern part of the country, teacher elementary training was first carried out by Finish missionaries at Oniipa from 1913 and was later extended to different areas like Okahao in 1948, Oshigambo in 1952 and Ongwediva in 1979 (Cohen, 1994; Ilukena, 2008; Lehtonen, 1998; Ralaingita, 2008). According to Cohen (1994), the entry requirements at the above-mentioned missionary teacher institutions were very low; mere accomplishment of Standard 2 which is equivalent to Grade 4 in the present Namibian curriculum grading system, and only indigenous Black teachers were trained at such institutions. The examination taken by these teachers is reported to be “equivalent to even the lowest requirements... in any of the provinces in the Union” (p.89). Teacher training for the Blacks had very little support from the government in terms of buildings, funding or provision of teachers; the responsibility was thus, almost on the shoulders of missionaries and community members which was not an easy undertaking (Cohen, 1994; Lehtonen, 1998). Lehtonen (1998), a Finish missionary amongst the Ovawambo, describes the harsh conditions in which the first female teachers at Okahao went through in the late 1930s:

“classrooms were built with mud bricks ...they had no beds, they had to sleep on the floor and they had to make their own sleeping mats [made of palm leaves]...they had no transport, the only transport available was their own feet, travelling long distances [through dense forests packed with wild animals], carrying their belongings on heads...there was no ceiling in their rooms, so they suffered from cold at night...there was no modern dining room, they had to sit down on the floor eating pap from handmade baskets [oontungwa] and potteries [omatemba]” (literary translated from p.76).

As was the circumstance with indigenous basic education, Katzao (1999) also acknowledges that teacher training for Africans was also gender based. Female teachers were admitted with very low entry requirements so that they could be trained specially to teach lower primary classes. The low qualifications they have acquired put them in a vulnerable position to be the lowest and the worst paid personnel in the teaching ranking system. This fact has proved the government’s discount and disrespect for elementary learning and women in particular.

The Coloured teachers were trained at special institutions from their own ethnic group in South Africa where the minimum requirements were Standard 8 or 10, equivalent to Grade 10 and 12 respectively. In the same line, White teachers had to go to South Africa or European countries like Germany for tertiary training with full state financial assistance (Cohen, 1994; Katzao, 1999).

In 1973 there were seven training institutes for African teachers, which were mainly secondary schools with teacher training wings (Nyambe & Griffiths, 2001) namely, Ongwediva in Owamboland, Augustineum in Windhoek, Cornelius Goreseb in Khorixas, Rundu in Kavango, Okakarara in Hereroland, Caprivi in Katima Mulilo (Caprivi) and Döbra in Windhoek. According to South West Africa Survey of 1974, the total number of student teachers were 2664 taught by 141 teachers throughout the country (Katzao, 1999). The entry requirements for a two or three-year training at such institutions was Standard VI (Grade 8), for a teaching qualification which was lower than that of Coloureds and Whites, as also teacher salaries. This was more prominent at institutions in areas beyond the Police Zone (ZP)<sup>1</sup> or the “red line” (Cohen, 1994). Although the shortage and ineffective training of indigenous teachers at secondary level was evident, the Van Zyl Commission<sup>2</sup> was not willing to establish more teacher and vocational training institutions or send teachers to South Africa for training, being considered as a local responsibility. Further studies and training opportunities outside the country were very narrow for many Black students due to poor primary background and financial assistance. Only very few with matriculation exemption got opportunities to attend Black university colleges in South Africa, provided they return to their country upon completion of their studies. This indicates that education for the indigenous, mainly the Blacks was not only unavailable, but was also not financially attended to. Cohen (1994) argues that there was no institution in the country where Black teachers could be trained for secondary level teaching until a new multi-racial Academy for Tertiary Education was established in Windhoek in 1980. However, the new institution was not independent, it was operating and preparing students to be awarded qualifications for the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Technikon College in Pretoria until a new Academy Act, No. 9 of 1985 enabled its autonomy to award its own qualifications. Nevertheless, due to firm restricting space, lack of facilities and staff, it was still difficult for

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<sup>1</sup>Police zone or red line was a colonial internal boundary which existed between 1890s to the 1960s. It has separated most of the indigenous African tribes such as Ovawambo, Kavango and other tribes in Kaokoland mostly seen as a big threat from White settlers in central and southern parts of the country. The border served as a security zone of the entire colonial empire in both Namibia and South Africa and represented a space of transition between the healthy White settlers in southern Africa and the imperial Black barbarians in African interior, that is, it has separated ‘civilization’ from ‘wilderness’ or ‘darkness’ (Walther, 2013). The line restricted Whites from moving to the north, but predominantly Blacks in the north to enter the prohibited area without valid legal document, the “pass.” Only men who were hired as ‘contract laborers’ for a prescribed period were allowed to enter (McKenna, 2011) after several medical check-ups. According to Du Pisani (2000), the purpose for Police Zone was to limit the movements of both people and animals to curb livestock diseases from the northern to the central and southern parts of the country.

<sup>2</sup>The commission appointed in 1958 by the South African government under Dr. H.J. van Zyl to investigate Black and Coloured education in South West Africa in order to separate the two education systems, and to decide the extent the South African system of Bantu Education should be applied to SWA (Cohen, 1994).

the Black majority population to secure admission and enrolment at the new institution (Ilukena, 2008).

According to Ilukena (2008), until 1976, White and Coloured colleges were awarding three and four-year teacher diplomas of which the Senior Certificate was the requirement; while Black colleges in the north could only offer two-year primary teacher courses that is, Lower Primary Teacher Certificate (LPTC) with a minimum requirement of Standard 6, and Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) which required the Junior Secondary Certificate (Standard 8) to enter. Black teachers have got their first Junior Secondary Teacher Certificate (JSTC) training offer in 1977, and unfortunately many did not have a Senior Certificate to go for the Diploma in education. When the above-mentioned teacher courses have been phased out a new two-year teacher course, Education Certificate Primary (ECP), with a minimum requirement of Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) was introduced. However, Cohen (1994) condemns it for being more concentrated on matriculation subjects and suffered the professional dimension of the course including school organisation and administrative work. The training was more on theoretical and not on practice of teaching; teacher trainers were considered inexperienced and unqualified; and more importantly teachers were not being specialised in specific subjects. This is confirmed by the findings of the study conducted among Life Science teachers by Ndemuweda (2011) as teachers profess that their ECP training was mainly about different subject methodologies (didactics), but not necessarily on content. Dahlstrom (1995) states that ECP course “did not give Black students proper qualification if not accompanied with a Standard 10 matriculation, a combination which was necessary to be placed at a professional level in the salary scale” (p. 274). On the other hand, Cohen (1994) recognises that ECP course was considered as a “typical Bantu Education-style special programme for black teachers” which tried to advance the standards of education in realistic ways because it has aided many primary-trained teachers to acquire Standard 10 qualification. When the ECP course was phased out it was replaced by a short-lived National Education Certificate (NEC) which was designed in line with contemporary educational philosophy, but it was still reflecting the status quo. These two recent pre-independence qualifications, ECP and NEC, like other earlier qualifications, were not recognised as proper qualifications in the salary scales for teachers in the post-independence Namibia. Dahlstrom et al. (1999) and Nyambe and Griffiths (2001) describe teacher programmes offered in Namibia before independence as teacher-and content-centred with little teaching practice and not school-based, examination and test-driven, transmission of knowledge established on rote

learning and memorisation, and aimed at qualification attainment rather than teacher understanding and development. In the same line with Ralaingita (2008) and Cohen (1994), they further argue that previous teacher programmes were authoritarian in nature; that is, they were more of discipline and authority, power and control which were designed to maintain and enhance inequities and inequalities of the social order of the time and teachers were accustomed to support it. This task was facilitated by a large cadre of the South African Defence Force who were deployed mainly in northern areas as teachers, carrying their weapons to classrooms to intimidate and instil fear in students. As clearly asserted by Nyambe and Griffiths (2001) in teacher colleges, “curriculum was delivered through the barrel of the gun in those bitter days” (p.2). Teaching and training did not support and entertain progressive and modern philosophy of education which includes freedom of speech, democratic, independent and critical thinking ideas and were therefore out of the question.

During the liberation struggle, SWAPO took teacher education and training as a matter of urgent concern and for that reason the liberation movement sent many teachers to different countries inside and outside of the continent for training, while at the same time putting its own teacher education and training programmes in place. As stipulated earlier, many countries, organisations and university teacher educators worldwide have assisted in that development (Dahlstrom et al., 1999). After independence the new government established the Higher Commission on Higher Education headed by Professor J. D. Turner in 1991 to identify the prerequisites, difficulties and possibilities of higher education. Upon its recommendations and proposals, the Academy was developed into the University of Namibia (UNAM) in 1992 following the cabinet’s University of Namibia Bill of 1992. The new Faculty of Education maintained and made many new teacher course programs available which were context-specific. However, given their design that emphasised on educational administration and management as other courses existed before independence, some of them, mainly the primary level courses like Education Diploma Primary (ED Prim) and Higher Primary Education Certificate (HPEC) were permanently phased out in the 1990s to give way to secondary level courses. From those years, the pre-service training at primary level in Namibia has been done at colleges, while that of secondary level teachers offered at UNAM (Ralaingita, 2008).

Given the anticipated national education reform agenda and the direct participation of teachers in effecting reforms, there was a vital need to improve the education and training of teachers to ensure the success thereof. This has resulted in the initiation of the new teacher

program, Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), by the Ministry of Education at four colleges of education namely: Caprivi, Rundu, Ongwediva and Windhoek with the total number of 470 pre-service first in-takers in 1993 (Cohen, 1994; Dahlstrom, 1995; Ilukena, 2008; Ralaingita, 2008). The program has also been extended to a distance in-service mode, though in limited numbers, with the purpose of improving and upgrading knowledge and qualification of the un-qualified and semi-qualified teachers from the apartheid system. Unlike previous teacher education courses offered in the apartheid era based on teacher passivism, knowledge transmission, rote learning and memorisation; BETD teacher course was designed around constructivist ideas and principles. The program was designed to address the economic, social, cultural and political needs and challenges of the modern progressive world. It is based on the learner-centred ideas and is more school-based which allows for active participation of teachers and critical inquiries. Unlike in the past, teachers are viewed as active participants in learning and not as “empty vessels” (*tabula rasa*) to be filled with knowledge by experts. Teachers’ prior knowledge and experiences are seen as critical and are therefore acknowledged because it is where new knowledge and experiences are linked and related to during the process of reflection (Ilukena, 2008).

The new teacher education program attempted to fill the gaps and flaws observed and experienced in teacher courses offered in the past; a big move in unifying and standardising the national education of teachers which is not racial, ethnic or gender based (Dahlstrom et al., 1999). There was no or very slim opportunities for secondary level teacher education in the past as mentioned earlier. Therefore, to increase the number of qualified and specialised subject teachers at secondary level, BETD was designed to cover up to a junior secondary level (grade 10) and was offering a variety of learning specialisation subjects. According to Dahlstrom (1999), BETD was distinctive from previous teacher courses because of its Critical Practitioner Inquiry (CPI) component which consists of two elements namely, the School Based Studies (SBS) and the Education Theory and Practice (ETP). At the end of their first-year, teachers get exposed to experience real teaching situations and contexts as they are sent to schools through SBS to investigate, observe and gather information about teaching materials and resources, teaching methodologies and learning strategies; as well as about school administration, schooling and society in their second year. For knowledge production, student teachers conduct an independent project/study to demonstrate their understanding and skills as they are expected to link empirical information collected from schools to theoretical perspectives presented in ETP through producing reports at the end of

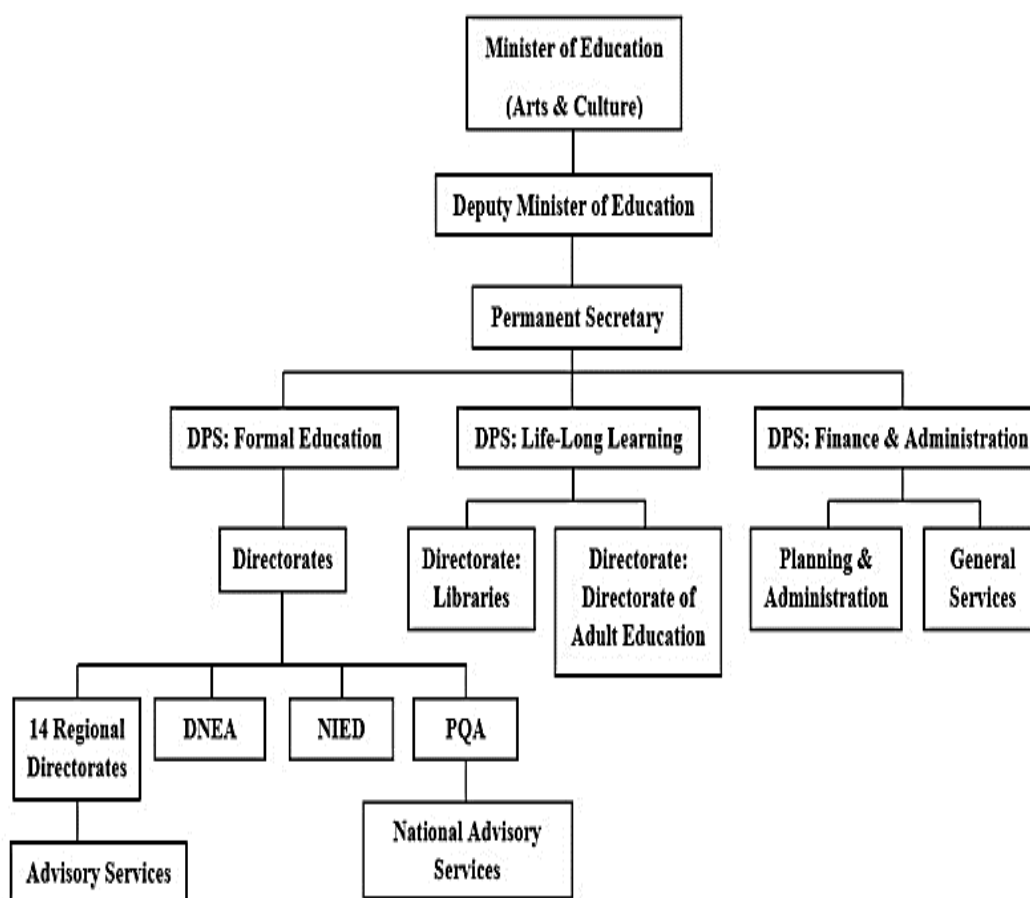
their course program. The program was based on criterion-referenced assessment policy rather than normative assessment, which puts a stronger weight on subject knowledge learning instead of didactics as it was more predominant in previous programs.

## 2.3 The Structure of the Namibian Education System

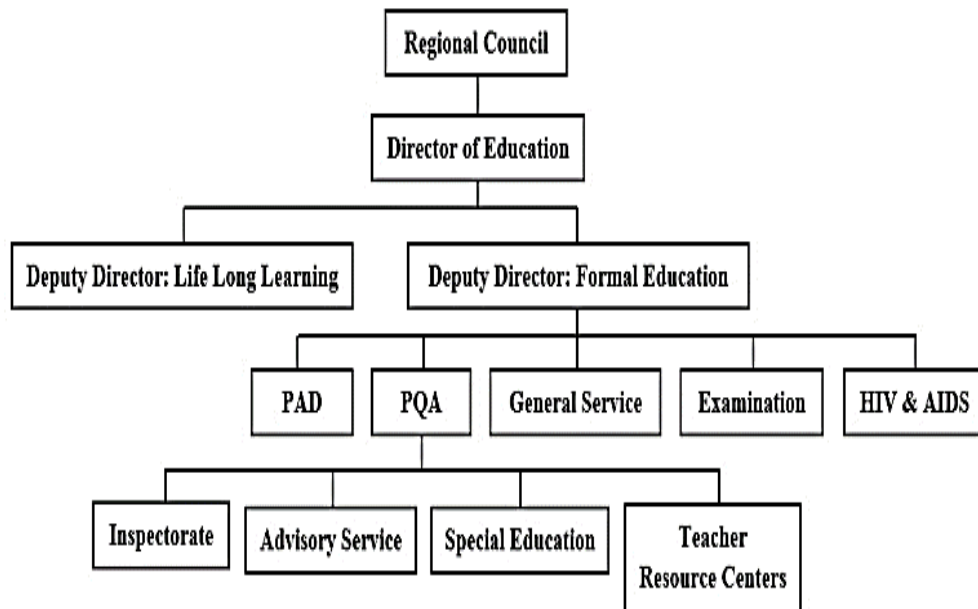
The current Namibian governance that commenced on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015 divided the education system into two ministries namely: The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture; and the Ministry of Higher education, Training and Innovation.

The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture covers pre-primary, primary and secondary phases of education, and constitutes of departments and directorates.

**Figure 2.1: The Structure and Organogram of the Ministry of Education in Namibia (Adopted From: Education Officers' Manual, 2015, p.20)**



**Figure 2.2: The Regional Structure of the Ministry of Education in Namibia (Adopted From: Education Officers' Manual, 2015, p.21)**



According to the Ministry of Education (2010), the Basic Education in Namibia is sub-divided into five phases:

- Pre-Primary Phase: for children of 4-6 years;
- Lower Primary Phase: Grades 1-4, for 6-10 years taught with mother tongue as the medium of instruction;
- Upper Primary Phase: Grades 5-7, for 10-13 years with English as the medium of instruction onwards;
- Junior Secondary Phase: Grades 8-10, for 13-16 years; and
- Senior Secondary Phase: Grades 11-12 for 16-18 years adolescents.

The formal Basic Education is compulsory for all children from pre-primary to, whichever comes first, junior secondary phase (grade 10) or the age of 16 years. Primary education and schooling is provided free of charge in government schools. A school can either be a primary (grades 1-7), secondary (grades 8-12), or combined. Combined schools comprise of both

primary and secondary phases, with very few consisting of all grades. In most cases, they end at grade ten.

To help monitor learner acquisition of basic competencies at the end of the primary phase, learners take a national grade seven examination in Maths, English and Science as it was introduced for the first time in 2000. Grade ten in Namibia is very critical because learners write the national Junior Secondary Examinations (JSE) that lead learners in different directions. Those who meet the requirements proceed with formal senior secondary education or go for vocational education and training; whereas those who could not meet the requirements go for distance learning which may enable them to re-enter the formal education or enter the poor skill employment or even end up unemployed. For their school leaving certificate at the end of grade 12, they take the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) at either Ordinary or Higher level which replaced the International General Certificate of Secondary Education Higher/ International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE/HIGCSE) respectively.

The senior secondary curriculum is a two-year course designed around aims, which are similar as that of the formal basic education. However, they stress more on achieving broad and balanced command of knowledge, skills and attitudes in all domains of development, democratic attitudes and skills development, development of a sense of national identity, unity and loyalty as Namibians, preparing learners to acquire qualifications of international recognized standards for further admission, to prepare them for the world of work and self-employment and to encourage life-long learning. The main curricular issues involve the introduction of different fields of study through the combination of subjects supplemented by a variety of extra-curricular activities, social activities and parental and community involvement. The LCE policy acknowledges learners as active, inquisitive human beings with individual needs of learning and because of learners' level of maturity, they are expected to share and display more responsibility of their own learning. Other curricular issues include cross-curricular teaching, English across the curriculum, gender consideration and relevance of the curriculum to the social and economic needs of the Namibians.

The senior secondary curriculum has provided two options: The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and the Higher International General Certificate of Secondary Education (HIGCSE). Learners can organise their senior secondary course by choosing all the six subjects only at IGCSE or HIGCSE levels, or by combining subjects



from both levels. However, not all learners are advantaged to choose subjects at HIGCSE levels, because not all senior secondary schools in the country can provide all subjects at higher levels due to factors such as teacher capability and availability of resources at schools.

## **2.4 The Nature of Curriculum Changes in Independent Namibian Education System**

The education system in Namibia and the curriculum changes have taken two transformations since independence. The first transformation, which took place immediately after independence in 1990, emphasises on access and equity within a democratic culture (Ilukena, 2007; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). It has also introduced the major reforms related to design and redressed the inequalities and disparities of the previous apartheid education system that was based on race and ethnicity segregation lines. It has divided the curriculum of the formal schooling into two phases: the formal basic education, consisting of grades 1 to 10 (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1996), and the senior secondary phase which comprises of grades 11 to 12 (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1998). However, the Ministry of Education (2010) further sub-divided these phases into five as described earlier. The following is a brief overview of the designs of the two transformations and the major changes pertained to the curriculum they carried along.

The first transformation organised the formal basic education curriculum around a number of different subjects which are categorised into 9 learning areas, namely: aesthetic, social and economic, linguistic and literacy, mathematical, spiritual, moral and ethical, physical, natural scientific, and technological. The medium of instruction differs according to grade levels. Learning at the early grades (0-3) is facilitated in mother tongue or the familial local language, whereas English is used from grade 4 onwards as a medium of instruction.

The curriculum has been designed around democratic and constructivist philosophy to redress the inequalities of the past. The philosophy embraces and introduces the learner-centred education as the basis around which all the principles and practices are established, including the approaches to teaching and learning, and the general way teaching is structured. The learner-centred education involves aspects such as approaches to teaching and learning, interests of learners, gender dimension, positive discipline, learning and instructional materials and organisation of teaching. The fundamental awareness of learner-centeredness is the inception of every learning process starting with learners' existing knowledge, skills,

interests and understanding and experiences obtained in and outside the school. It locates the learner at the centre of consideration in all aspects. Teaching means to plan and structure lessons that encourage and stimulate active participation and involvement; use a variety of challenging but interesting techniques to explain, demonstrate, assess understanding, solve problems and alike. Teachers need to consider the level of maturity and previous experience of learners as well as the nature of the content to find ways of stimulating learners' interest.

Gender equity has to do with providing equal opportunities of choice of optional subjects, as well as equal treatment in the classroom and school at large. Teachers must see to it that negative issues like favouritism, bias and stereotype do not prevail in their classes, so that all school committees and councils are well balanced in terms of gender representation. Discipline in learner-centeredness is designed to be supportive, challenging and meaningful. Corporal punishment does not promote positive discipline, it is against the Namibian constitution, and should be abolished. The learning and instructional materials as vehicles to deliver a specific knowledge must be learner-friendly, challenging, stimulating and effective so that they can enrich and reinforce learning, engage attention and actively involve learners in a way that enhance and facilitate the achievement of lesson objectives. Lastly, teaching should be organised in such a way that teacher-learner relationships are kept healthy; the potential of every learner is realised; equity and democracy are promoted; and that school subjects are cross-linked through teaching.

The second round of the reform process started in 2006 and it ensures that the country's development plan, Vision 2030, will be achieved. Vision 2030 is a national strategic development plan, which aspiringly determines to position Namibia among high income developed countries by the year 2030. It targets to improve the life quality for all citizens by hastening economy progress and developing social equity. This is achieved through knowledge provision and application thereof in creating job opportunities to poverty elimination (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Namibian Ministry of Education has realised that over the period of 15 years after independence in 1990 the existing education system was not progressing rapidly enough towards the realisation of the anticipated economic growth and social equity development by year 2030, and as a result it has established a new initiative, the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). ETSIP aimed at improving the existing system, with its attention paid to the quality of the products of the education system through hastening and accelerating education development plans which aim to improving efficiency in resource allocation, equity, and management and delivery of

education (Ilukena, 2007). The assumption behind the second reform process is, as clearly stipulated by Ilukena (2007), that “powerful learning does not occur by accident, it is the result of an effective learning situation created by a skilful teacher... in schools designed to support powerful learning” (p.2). This reform is more focussed on the development and empowerment of schools and teachers because it is believed that “the quality of teaching lies at the heart of effective schooling” (p.3). Therefore, to unlock the full potential of the next generation for future success, human development and long-term vision learning need to be seen as lifelong adventure. Strategic efforts for lifelong learning undertaken by the programme include: provision of textbooks and learner materials, improvement in school management and administration, improvement in accountability, expansion of senior secondary education, and more involvement of various elements that need to work in combination to achieve this common purpose (Ilukena, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2007). These developments resulted in a countless number of changes and initiatives at school, subject and classroom levels with teachers as key implementers.

To accelerate the rapid growth of economy, the education system has targeted to transform the present predominant Namibian agrarian economy society into a knowledge-based economy society, and similarly to prepare the citizens for the future knowledge-based society. An agrarian economy refers to one based on farming whilst knowledge-based is based on the creation and application of knowledge. According to the Ministry of Education (2010), learners are prepared and empowered for the future knowledge-based society through the learning process to develop individually for a caring, healthy, democratic, productive, environmentally sustainable and informative society. As a result, the basic education (grades pre-school to 12) curriculum has been revised for knowledge-based education provision. The new revised curriculum was designed to include content relevant to knowledge-based education, which is information and communication technologies (ICTs), entrepreneurship, environmental education, art, human rights and democracy, gender, HIV and AIDS, and Life skills.

This involves mainstreaming ICTs (computers, audio and visual media) in primary and secondary education and have all teachers fully capable in using it to enable teaching-learning processes and incorporate them perfectly in teaching. Subjects like English, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Entrepreneur and Arts have been strengthened, with English and Mathematics made compulsory for grade 12 examination as from 2012. To address and deal with risks and challenges in the Namibian society, HIV/AIDS education, Life skills,

Health and wellness education, Human rights and democracy, ICTs, Entrepreneur, and Environmental learning are integrated across the curriculum.

Inclusive education to include learners with special education needs and other individual needs have also been introduced. This must be done through variation of methods and materials needed by adjusting the curriculum, methods and materials to learners with needs. This also includes the pregnancy policy as grounded on democracy, equality, non-discrimination and human rights.

Competency is measured through use of nationally standardised assessments, stipulation of teacher working hours and qualifications, as well as teaching of subjects by qualified teachers. Some teaching styles have been suggested, for example, subject teachers to follow same class throughout phase (upper primary and junior secondary); teaching teams around classes and following classes through the grades of the phase; and single-subject specialists at senior secondary level, that is, a teacher not to be allocated more than two subjects though qualified for both. Teachers are expected to be fully conversant with the curriculum and its implications, the process of knowledge creation and teaching, as well as learning and assessing in a learner-centred way.

## **2.5 Learner-Centered Education Policy**

Learner-centred is an adopted education policy after independence in Namibia. It serves as the framework around which all education activities, management and administration should be based and operated. The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture has first introduced and articulated the Learner-centred education policy in *Towards Education for All: A development brief for education, culture and training*, in 1993 around four education goals namely: access, equity, quality and democracy.

### **2.5.1 Historical background of learner-centered education**

Learner-centered education is pronounced by Henson (2003) as having its origin rooted in the teaching histories of first educators like Confucius, Socrates, Locke, Pestalozzi, Hegel and Herbart who recognized the importance of a learner in education. These were later followed by other educators like Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey who shaped and developed it into a constructivism education theory. According to McCombs and Whisler (cited in Henson, 2003) and Hansen and Stephens (2000), learner-centered education is an educational

perspective that foregrounds individual learners as the main agents of learning who must take learning initiatives and interact socially with other learners. The approach values learners' experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, capacities, interests and needs. Unlike the didactic traditional education which is based on teachers and the teaching process, learner-centered education put its emphasis on learners and the learning in the programs, policies and the teaching process that aims for effective learning of all learners. Both Woelfel (2003) and Henson (2003) assert that learner-centered education puts more demands from teachers and school administrators at school, district and national levels. Teachers are expected to have wide knowledge about learners in terms of their needs, interests, goals and beliefs; how the process of learning occurs best; and to be well familiar with different teaching strategies for effective learning. School administrations at all levels are expected to manage, develop and maintain conducive environments for effective learning by making sure that teachers receive necessary knowledge, materials and resources needed to enhance the learning process.

### **2.5.2 Learner-centered education curriculum as an inevitable borrowed policy**

Phillips (2005), defines the concept policy borrowing as “a conscious adoption in one context of policy observed in another” (p. 24). Adoption is termed conscious because it is thoroughly thought of and intentionally embraced resulting from its *ipso facto* influence.

According to Jansen (1995), the adoption of the learner-centered education policy by the Namibian government was an inevitable political incident which was influenced by a variety of regional and global political factors prevailing at the time of independence. In the first stance, the socialist ideology anticipated by SWAPO during the struggle years which encourages drastic social and political plan, was no longer sustained in regional countries like Mozambique and Zimbabwe as a result of tussle due to economic failure and international pressure to abide to the International Monetary Fund principles. The other factor was the inability of the ruling party, SWAPO, to gain a two-third majority, rather 57.3% (p. 247), in the country's first multiparty independent elections in 1989. This achievement has incapacitated the ruling party and the government in general to effectively make radical changes because opposition parties though small, were strong enough to secure their political, economic and social interests. Therefore, debates regarding the invention of the constitution of the new government were collaborated. Furthermore, the new government has proclaimed the “policy of reconciliation” upon its initiation whereby it has decided to undertake changes and shifts in steady and reconciliatory manner. Though this was a step forward achieved

however; it was also a precondition to qualify the new government for development support from the international donor community, mainly Western countries, which was profoundly needed.

The factors described above do not only apply to economic, political and social but also to educational shift from apartheid to democracy. The Namibian education policy and so the formal knowledge thereof, has also been influenced by and premised on the “politics of compromises and accords” (Jansen, 1995). In that sense, the national curriculum policy was designed and informed by the politics of opinions and knowledge accrued from exile via United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) and regional research studies by international donors like USAID, UNESCO and UNICEF. The decision making on the education policy and its implementation was a compromise of complex bureaucratic structure which involved a variety of stakeholders, including education officers from the previous apartheid government who were predominantly White; a large and strong contingent of foreign experts; the Minister of education himself through his active role and participation; and parallel structures that were set up within the Ministry. The large crew of foreign experts had an advantage that enabled them to demonstrate a great effect on education policy, by grounding it on traditions, beliefs and values which are not of African origin. This was made possible by the underrepresentation of Black Namibians in the decision-making process because by independence, those who were qualified and capable were not holding top positions in the Ministry. It has also been pointed out that the expertise of White conservative officers who were in top posts in the Ministry were at certain points deliberately undermined.

### **2.5.3 Learner-centered education policy in the Namibian context**

The education system in Namibia before independence is said by Angola, the first minister of Education and Culture in Namibia, to be a “tale of two worlds: one black, bleak and deprived; the other white, rich and comfortable” (O'Sullivan, 2004a, p. 8). It was a racially segregated education system from the South African apartheid government with its educational and cultural policies designed around the apartheid ideology and racial traditions. It was racial because the education system for the Whites was superior from that of the native indigenous Black people in terms of quality, funding and material provision. Black education was inferior, teacher-centered, behaviourist, positivist, and emphasized memorization, rote learning and punitive discipline (Jansen, 1995; Nekhwevha, 1999; O'Sullivan, 2004b). It was against this background that the Namibian government found it significant and imperative to

change and introduce a new education philosophy that would redress the racial inequalities of the past to replace the existed education system (O'Sullivan, 2004b). Given the policy of political democracy based on respect of basic human rights adopted by the Namibian Constitution, the new government therefore embraced a new corresponding education policy to teaching and learning, the learner-centred education at the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien in 1990, established on goals of access, equity, quality and democracy (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008).

Learner-centred education is premised on a development paradigm which promotes a political ideology of democratisation essential for social, economic and political development (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993; O'Sullivan, 2004a; Tabulawa, 2003). Learner-centered education is described as an “ideological outlook, a worldview intended to develop a preferred kind of society and people” (Tabulawa, 2003, p. 7), and a “foundation for the building of democratic citizens and societies and therefore national development capacity” (Schweisfurth, 2011, p. 419). Similarly, in the Namibian context, learner-centered education is seen as a useful tool through which economic, social and political development of societies can be achieved as agreed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993); that it is a basic Human Right, a “foundation for development...and for democracy” (p.42). It has been cherished worldwide as the “policy panacea,” (Schweisfurth, 2011, p. 421) and has the effect of improving the learning outcomes of learners, and is overall an answer to countless educational problems.

#### **2.5.4 Theoretical foundations of learner-centered education**

The Learner-centred education underpins theoretical foundation concepts such as the learner, learning, knowledge, intelligence, language, gender and cultural discourse, and African indigenous knowledge. The concept *learner* in learner-centered education is broad because it transcends age groups and school learning period because it is grounded on the concept of lifelong activity which considers learning as a process rather than an event. It includes children, young and any person capable of playing the role of a learner. Learners have natural inquisitiveness and willingness to learn, explore and make meaning of it. Learners are active and autonomous participants in the process of learning, who bring and use their social experience and knowledge from family and communities and integrate them with the knowledge acquired from school (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 1998; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

*Learning* is seen as a cooperative, mutual, creative and meaningful process. It is both individual and collaborative, where new knowledge is interrelated to what is previously known. While teacher-centered education sees learners as blank slates who should be provided with knowledge by experts through rote memorization and repetition, on the contrary, learner-centered education acknowledges learners' existing experiences and knowledge and considers them as valuable wealth that facilitate the learning process. Learners use their experiences to assimilate new knowledge that is, to add and modify their previous understanding into new understanding. Therefore, teaching in learner-centered education is planned in such a way that it creates opportunities that enhance learners' ability to think and build new learning content into what they previously know (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

*Knowledge* is seen as dynamic, that is, it is constantly and rapidly changing from time to time. This understanding is replacing the common belief of seeing knowledge as permanent and static. The speed of change may be slower or faster, depending on the causal pressure and need for knowledge content in a particular context. The ways people come to acquire knowledge also change. Change is affected as people reflect on their experiences and past actions and in the process, they get dissatisfied. As a result, in attempt to improve for satisfaction, they initiate new understandings and methods of knowing. The dynamic nature of knowledge empowers teaching to shift from imparting content-based and factual information through rote memorization to learners, by supporting them to learning with understanding. Teaching in learner-centered education should aim to develop not only learners' academic, but also their practical, and social skills (Avenstrup, 2007; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

*Intelligence* refers to our ability to think, feel and act. As humans, we have various intelligences for example, linguistic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and emotional intelligence. But though they have different effects in our bodies, they are interconnected because they all contribute to our holistic experiences, thoughts and emotions. Significant development of multiple intelligences is achieved when people understand the interrelatedness which exists between different things. In schools, this is achieved by exposing learners to different learning experiences through different teaching approaches and strategies, teaching resources and assessment conditions (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).



*Language* is a fundamental asset to learning because it is an important medium through which people communicate. Language is integral to one's identity and culture, built by people through social interaction with others. Children acquire and increase their language vocabulary and skills as they experiment and make fun of it through plays, songs and telling stories. Moreover, they learn best through their mother tongues. Learning and development in mother tongue is critical because it helps learners to create positive self-images, uphold their own culture without prejudice and bias and to acquire the fundamental understanding of the world. Therefore, to achieve effective learning, and promote identity reinforcement through self-expression and language ecology preservation, learner-centered education demands for mother tongue teaching during the course of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2010; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

Practices in many different cultural groups and social contexts demonstrate how normally some people, for example, females have been discriminated against and their rights undermined based on *gender and cultural discourse*, both intentionally and unintentionally. Many theories and principles related to curriculum, learning, thinking or culture were constructed around hegemonic masculinity and are therefore universalistic, hierarchical and unconditional (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003 p.16). Regardless of gender, learner-centered education strongly emphasizes that all learners should be empowered to reach the utmost learning at their potential level. Gender equity of access at all levels must be applied for both girls and boys to study any subject of their choice due to their interest, talent and capability. Favoritism and prejudices of both teachers and learners, that girls are inferior to boys and cannot do tough subjects such as mathematics and natural sciences, need to be spoken out and dealt with openly and where possible to be confirmed wrong. This goes along with teacher classroom attitudes and treatment of boys and girls. Teachers need to be exemplary role models in terms of their expectations, attention they pay to each gender, awareness of learners' behaviour to each other and how boys and girls react differently to certain behaviour, and sensitivity when handling matters arising from gender-based negative attitudes or conflict situations. Learners also need to be challenged so that they can change their own perceptions and behaviour regarding gender within, and to realize the significance of mutual respect and equality (Ministry of Education, 2010; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

Learner-centered education develops from an apartheid system where social discriminations and disparities based on ethnic and racial groups were intentionally promoted. *African*

*indigenous knowledge* was regarded inferior, boring and uninteresting in school by either the missionaries or colonizers. As a result, it was deliberately dishonored, oppressed and suffocated. Learner-centered education therefore underlines the use of social context of learners as a source of support with regards to resources and knowledge creation where learning should be related. Given the background that African children have stronger attachments to adults, peers and communities at large, established during their upbringing, their identities as people are consequently deeply rooted in their immediate communities. Children in African communities are brought up in a future-oriented way with a sense of continuity in life, that is, they are taught different sorts of work or behavior in order to gain proficiency and growth in upcoming tasks as adults in their own homes and communities. Thus, learning is interrelated because it is seen as a contextual, social and a persistent process in life. It is interrelated in the sense that it is grounded on the African view that “nature is not separate from human kind, but part of our bondedness” (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003, p. 18). Natural or contextual knowledge and skills, together with African upbringing are very critical and should be carefully integrated in the curriculum to limit strange differences between European and African learner-centeredness. This includes issues like accepted norms such as appropriate behaviour and respect, and power relations and authority between adults and children and between males and females. That is why learner-centered education embraces the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ which aim to uplift the development of cultural diversity within social contexts. However, to meet the challenges posed by modernization and globalization the balance to locally contextualize the curriculum should be maintained by inculcating a sense of national identity within learners that enable them to co-exist as members of the same global village context (Ministry of Education, 2010; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

### **2.5.5 Goals and principles of learner-centered education**

Learner-centered approach has been referred by some authors like Brandes and Ginnis (2001) to as an alternative approach to the traditional approach, while Tabulawa (2003; 2013) termed them as progressive methods which embed strands of themes developed by various scholars which have more or less connected ideas. Themes associated to learner-centered approach involve democratic, enquiry-based, discovery methods, experiential and humanistic learning, active and participatory learning. The difference of themes is depicted by the extent at which learner autonomy is being stressed. According to the National Institute for Educational

Development (2003), the Namibian curriculum has rather preferred the term “learner-centred” rather than child-centred or student-centred because it does not see learning as a one-shot event, but as a lifelong ongoing process. The concept ‘pupil-centred’ is associated with conventional teaching and learning, and ‘child-centred’ is more age-related and is likely confined to schooling age period, while the term ‘student-centered’ is more of academic scholars. The term ‘learner-centered’ is not bound to any age or school term only, but transcends age and school, hence lifelong learning.

#### ***2.5.5.1 Goals of learner-centered education***

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) and the National Institute for Educational Development (2003) learner-centred education policy is expressed in four major goals for education namely, access, equity, equality and democracy.

*Access* refers to ensuring that all Namibian children get an opportunity to admission and entrance to schooling, as well as ensuring that knowledge and understanding is made available in meaningful ways. For the goal of access, the Namibian government has committed itself to providing universal education to all Namibian children. This is achieved by providing free primary education for every Namibian child to acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills and by expanding schooling capacity to ensure that enough room for all Namibian children is available. Access to education is likely possible if there are sufficient schools, classrooms and well qualified teachers where they are mostly needed (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993; Zeichner et al., 1998). Coupled with the earlier, is the addressing and minimising of barriers outside and inside schools that detract learners’ attendance and learning in schools. The government as well as other stakeholders see to it that all limitations, barriers and stumbling blocks in learners’ way, to attend school and their learning process for example, corporal punishment and some other tiresome ways that discourage learners to attend school have been removed. What and how they learn is approached in a meaningful way for learners to develop holistically and achieve their level best. Contextual conditions which do not promote and encourage learning, to mention but a few, walking of long distances to schools, corporal and punitive discipline from teachers, disrespecting and undermining of learner ideas, boring and monotonous lessons that do not encourage curiosity and creativity, and insufficient provision of food from the side of families or schools need to be addressed and dealt with. All have the potential to diminish learner access to schooling that is, lower down their motivation and encouragement to concentrate, follow and participate fully in classroom activities for meaningful learning and not just mere

schooling which culminates in diploma and certificates (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003).

*Equity* refers to equality and fairness where learners will be treated fairly and not discriminated because of their religious, family, gender, regional, cultural, economic and racial backgrounds. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993), the government education system has aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning by overpowering a legacy of discrimination and segregation that was built within the education system itself. To reach this goal, firstly the government ensures that there are enough schools, classrooms and equipment for all learners so that no learners are overcrowding with insufficient chairs, textbooks and writing books, while some are very few with more furniture, textbooks etc. in classes. Secondly, is to ensure the egalitarian school system provides equal opportunities for teaching and learning to all, that is, no learner is discriminated or excluded because of his/her race, religion, culture, gender and alike but, that all beneficiaries, learners and schools are provided fairly with equal infrastructure, competent teachers and resource materials. Thirdly, is to take affirmative action to redress the imbalances of the past. Affirmative action refers to “providing special encouragement and support for those who experienced discrimination in the past” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993, p.36) for example, supporting girls and Black learners to join and go for maths and science subjects and occupations that they could not take in the past. Lastly, is to observe the output and outcome results of learners to ensure that they are not balanced because of discriminatory practices due to race, gender or ethnicity.

The goal of education *quality* calls for the commitment to develop quality schools for quality results. To achieve this goal the education system sees to it that teachers are well prepared to be able to perform their tasks and duties very effectively. Since teachers are the key elements of school effectiveness and for the education system, teacher professional development, “an essential part of improving school performance” (Evans, 2002, p. 155) is of a great concern for the quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is achieved through teachers who see themselves as active agents of curriculum implementation, who constantly and continually review, restructure and renew their knowledge, expertise, skills and practice with learners to make them stimulate learners. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993), teacher effectiveness in organising and managing the learning process goes along with supportive and encouraging supervision from their immediate superiors to help them deal with problems they come across in their classrooms. For Zeichner et al. (1998) quality

education requires teachers who are not just mere workers, but who know and see their role in the nation-building process ready to go an extra mile to ensure that learning is more of a stimulating, cooperating, relevant to learners and inherently satisfying activity than before. In addition to measurable examination results, quality education also denotes the act of instilling a sense of self-confidence and social responsibility in learners, and ensuring that learners from all regions, races or genders equally succeed in all aspects of learning. Though earlier stated, again, provision and sufficiency of instructional resources as well as the improvement of school physical facilities for conducive learning are substantial in education quality.

A *democratic* education encourages active participation, discovery, decision making, respect and trust through clear accountability of stakeholders. According to Harber (1997), an ideal democratic citizen does not only acquire values but also personal features like critical thinking, self-confidence, creativity and independence. Considering the learner-centered education departing point of placing learner interests, level of development and prior experiences to the fore, teachers are expected to integrate knowledge embedded in school subjects with life outside school in communities and teach them how to use local and natural resources available to them. Since democracy is about human responsibilities and rights, a democratic education system is “organised around broad participation in decision making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993, p. 41). Teaching practice needs to be democratic, where learners are allowed to make decisions and take responsibility concerning their learning, and not just to be instructed on what and how to do and learn (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; Zeichner et al., 1998). This is also extended to communities and citizens at large to decide about their children’s’ education, domesticating the alienating and accept responsibility for its results.

#### ***2.5.5.2 Principles of learner-centred education***

The Citadel Undergraduate Catalog (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Henson, 2003) has premised LCE on five principles promoting the relationship between labour market and vision of the society in terms of required skills, knowledge and values needed for social, political and economic development.

*Active participation and involvement of learners:* This principle is based on the human nature that people need appreciation and acknowledgement (Brandes & Ginnis, 2001). It stresses that learners’ perspectives resulted from their experiences, interests, backgrounds and beliefs. These need to be acknowledged, appreciated and respected and as such should be attended to

by teachers in planning and evaluating the learning content. When learners become involved they develop a sense of responsibility, ownership and interest in the learning process.

*Consideration of learners' unique differences:* Learning becomes less threatening and interesting if it accommodates learners' personal abilities, talents, emotional states of mind, learning rates and styles, stages of development and feeling of self-efficacy. These help learners to see themselves differently, develop self-confidence and personal understanding, adopt realistic goals for themselves and change their maladaptive behaviours (Brandes & Ginnis, 2001).

*Relevance and meaningfulness of the learning content:* Learning is said to be effective and efficient when what is learned is linked to learners' needs and what they already know. Learners need to link the new knowledge to their previous knowledge and experiences and construct a new body of knowledge. What is taught and how it is taught has the capacity to determine the relevancy and meaningfulness of learning (Brandes & Ginnis, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002). Learning which is aimed to assist learners to identify, clarify and deal with their own personal, social, economic and political issues enhance motivation and interest for learning.

*Positive interpersonal relationships and interactions:* Learner-centered learning is based on the quality of relations and interactions between teachers and their learners. According to Brandes and Ginnis (2001), teachers' helping and supportive relationships, help learners to take responsibility and become more in charge of their own learning as they get involved in tasks where they must work together with other learners and their teachers. A helping and supportive relationship is denoted by equal opportunities and chances of both the teacher and learners contributing ideas, where teachers talk less and listen more to their learners' experiences and ideas and value them. In that way learners feel appreciated, valued, acknowledged and validated. As learners work together in groups, they make their own decisions and choices which they believe are valid (Henson, 2003; Woelfel, 2003). In so doing, they develop interest for development, maturity, self-confidence and self-dependency; the improvements that help them to cope with their own lives.

*Learning is a fundamental natural process.* This principle is based on the understanding that human beings are naturally curious and are interested to learn and know the world around them. This is the same case with learners as they feel attracted to learning what is happening around them (Hansen & Stephens, 2000; Henson, 2003). It promotes the teaching and

learning approach which aims to answer questions, thoughts, and interpretations held by learners about their environment by allowing them to use their senses through carefully planned activities and artefacts that engage them in play, questioning and discovery (Klefstad, 2015).

## **2.6 Critiques of Learner-Centered Education**

This section presents the overview of literature that critiques the learner-centered education policy. The critiques are discussed under two themes namely, learner-centred education as a neo-liberal ideology and learner-centred education as demeaning acquisition of knowledge.

### **2.6.1 Learner-centered education as a neo-liberal ideology**

At their independence, many periphery African countries were compelled to democratise and accept liberal democracy policies to receive foreign financial aids from rich countries for development. Even the pedagogy, learner-centred, they had to adopt was associated with the liberal democracy policy because it was never promoting either cognitive or educational development. However, it was serving as a tool for promoting political and economic emancipation. Like other countries, Namibia adopted and made learner-centered pedagogy an official pedagogy to receive monetary aids for development which was extremely needed. Different foreign educational projects such as Instant Project, Life Science Project, Mathematics and Science Teachers' Extension Program (MASTEP) and others facilitated the pedagogy through teacher training. As aid agencies, they have promoted and upheld both political and economic interests of the rich donor countries.

Learner-centered approach as a democratic approach detaches itself from any form of formality and control that is present in the well-known teacher-centred approach. It is also referred to as participatory learning because it allows for teacher-learner interactions and active participation for learners in discussions, debates, and critical questioning in classrooms. In learner-centred education, knowledge is not transmitted from an expert to the novice, but it is a social construct, constructed through social interactions with others (Tabulawa, 2003); and through the process of linking new information to prior knowledge and experiences by engagement, but not by transmission (Vavrus, Bartlett, & Salema, 2013).

According to Tabulawa (2013), learner-centred education has a hidden agenda which is not necessarily educational but rather political. He understands that learner-centered education is

an instrument and philosophy used to advance the infiltration of the capitalist ideologies in periphery countries in the name of democracy. It intends to transform the ways of thinking and doing things that is, the culture of people specifically those in periphery countries to make them understand and accept reality the same way as people in first world countries do. It works in close relation with globalization which is the main tool for neo-liberal ideology propagation. As they facilitate the learner-centered education, the aid agencies in the form of volunteering personnel working for foreign educational projects, promote and maintain the “status quo” of rich countries to ensure that their global interests are conserved. Teaching resources and technology used in education serve as powerful tools to spread and impose foreign cultures on people in poor peripheral countries, eroding their traditional and cultural values and norms. Instead of inculcating the skills, attitudes and knowledge essential for knowledge-based economy development for her Vision 2030 Namibia, like other developing countries, it is busy promoting the new version of neo-liberal democracy. When teachers and learners acquire mental democratic capacities and social attitudes, they turn schools and classrooms into democratic communities, operating in democratic ways that challenge conformism and compliance. Democratization of classrooms implies breaking of current authoritarian classroom climate and practices predominant in periphery country schools. As much as learner-centered education is admired and promoted in developing countries such as Namibia, it is however, being denigrated or criticized in the very same donor countries that are exporting it.

### **2.6.2 Learner-centered education policy demeans knowledge acquisition**

Horn (2009) states that learner-centred approach is grounded on the principle of natural learning by Rousseau which emphasises nature and natural learning through experience and self-discovery. It viewed teaching as an act of creating stimulating situations where learners learn in natural ways in agreement with their natural talents or propensities. Rousseau condemns direct teaching and memorisation and accepts that meaningful learning depends on understanding. Hence, he states: “Give your pupil no lesson in words; he must learn only by experience...Let him know nothing because you have told him, but because he has discovered it himself” (p. 514). This understanding opposes the traditional view of teaching which sees it as an artificial act of direct and purposive instruction and emphasises the storing of facts in memory to be accumulated as ready knowledge. The traditional perspective of teaching is based on the belief that only the primary cognitive abilities such as speech and



psychomotor which are biological processes can be learned naturally in normal conditions. However, the secondary cognitive abilities such as the 3Rs (reading, writing and numeracy) are not biological but artificial constructs which do not develop naturally unless they are explicitly taught. Understanding is not seen as learning, but rather the beginning of learning because learning is when what is understood is committed to memory to be readily available for use and problem-solving. Higher order thinking skills such as independent, critical thinking and problem solving are based on relevant and ready knowledge accumulated and stored in memory. Therefore, learners who do not accumulate any ready knowledge in their memories would find it difficult to develop such skills due to the absence of ready memorised knowledge. It is seen that demeaning memorisation implies demeaning knowledge itself, which is a downfall of education standards to acquire higher order thinking skills, because as Hirsch in Horn (2009) points out, independent-mindedness is always established on significant ready knowledge.

Authors such as Schweisfurth (2011) and Tabulawa (2003; 2013) critique the learner-centred education because it is established on social and epistemological foundations which are purely technically-based and not value-laden. This means that the success thereof depends only on provision and availability of technical factors such as resources; and teaching does not involve emotions. Therefore, learner-centred education is believed to be the universal, “one-size-fits-all” pedagogy; the “policy panacea,” (Lieberman & Mace, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2011, p. 421) that can be equally and effectively applied in any given context to solve many educational problems. However, the approach disregards the importance of the contexts in which it is applied. In other words, it is context-insensitive because it does not consider the uniqueness of contexts.

In Tanzania, Vavrus et al. (2013) argue that learner-centred approach is conditional, subjected to local contexts and therefore, is a contingent pedagogy. They emphasise that to study and examine how teachers implement and practice pedagogy it is of great importance to investigate the local aspects as given by the social and contextual varieties with great consideration on availability and limitations of resources in the schools. This is because the way teachers interpret their working life and policy practice can be changed positively or negatively by the tension created by differing encounters they have with their various educational histories, cultural, economic and social teaching contexts. Learner-centered education needs to consider certain teaching and learning aspects which may arise from specific cultural contexts and material circumstances for teachers, which may not be

applicable in all teaching contexts. This implies that learner-centered policy need not be understood as a policy appropriate in all contexts, because it may be limited by specific local cultural, economic, and political circumstances and may impact on classroom practice. This is because what and how teachers do depend on what they think.

Another negative thought against learner-centred approach raised by Tabulawa (2003) and Horn (2009) is that the approach fails to provide evidence which proves that it is super or better than the traditional approach. Justifications by its advocates indicate its lack of precision on its efficiency and are mute in providing convincing validation that learner-centred approach is better than traditional teaching methods in terms of improving learner academic achievement (Guthrie, 2016; Schweisfurth, 2013). The undisputable findings from the educational experiment conducted in America over the period from 1967 to 1995 on the hypothesis of the superiority of learner-centred teaching indicated that “...students taught by highly structured, teacher-directed methods came out on top and wholly learner-centred at the bottom” (Horn, 2009, p. 521). The superiority of teacher-centred approach is yet again proved by the findings of the study by an American sociologist Coleman that high academic achievement is achieved by schools which “follow a rich and demanding curriculum; provide a structured, orderly environment; offer lots of explicit instruction, including drill and practice; and expect every child to reach minimal goals in each subject by the end of the year” (Horn, 2009, p. 522). This finding challenges the cherished teaching pedagogy and support the critiques levelled against it in failing to improve student academic achievement.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the educational background and its surrounding circumstances in Namibia, depicting it from pre-colonial times to the post-colonial period. It has shown the role that each education phase and structure prevailed in the country played in locating people of different racial groups in the Namibian society. The impact left by the colonial and apartheid education system policies is proving to be difficult to do away with in a very short time. Although the new government has initiated new policies and training programs for teachers, more than two decades ago, the country is still experiencing problems of poor education quality in schools that satisfy the majority of learners. The adopted learner-centred education policy seems to be not well implemented for the knowledge-based society as anticipated in Vision 2030. Traditional, didactic and teacher-centred approaches to teaching and learning still pre-dominate Namibian classrooms. Although remarkable efforts

through in-service training such as workshops to assist long-serving teachers, in understanding and implementing the policy have been made, the quality of teaching is still very poor in many schools in Namibia. This is manifest in assessment reports released by the Ministry of Education and numerous academic studies conducted throughout the country. The fact that the curriculum demands what has not been known and rooted in the history of teachers points to the challenge of improving the subjective views and perceptions of teachers towards teaching and learning.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the overview of the historical-contextual background of the conditions and circumstances of the different phases which the Namibian education system has passed through. The overview has indicated that many Namibian teachers, especially who have been taught in the former South African apartheid system, have been exposed to challenging intellectual, emotional as well as social experiences during their schooling days. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature that examine the issues of curriculum implementation and teacher working lives. It also analyses the explanations proposed regarding influences that persuade teachers to do what they do in their classrooms and explain why it proves difficult for them to change their teaching practices. Although this study is about secondary school teachers, studies reviewed report of teachers at different levels of the schooling system and have used a variety of methodologies for data collection and analysis. Some studies are designed for specific subject teachers in diverse contexts. The review is organised in two main themes. The first theme provides a review on the “teacher work life” concept and its aspects; while the second discusses the notion of curriculum and its implementation.

#### **3.2 The Concept ‘Teacher Work Life’**

For Kelchtermans (2017), ‘teacher work life’ means to understand what it means to live a life of a teacher; what it means to become a teacher; what it means to be a teacher; to stay in teaching or to leave teaching; and why teachers do what they do the way they do it. I find this body of knowledge relevant for this study because of its purpose to understand experiences, views, feelings and interpretation of teachers regarding the implementation of the learner-centered policy. The concept “teacher work life’ (or working lives) is however, broad. Many scholarly works conducted around teacher work life hardly provide a formal definition of the concept. It has become a taken-for-granted concept which is mostly interpreted and related to teachers’ lives and work (Goodson, 2008). ‘Work life’ is a term used to define the combination of an individual’s private life and work responsibilities. It is strongly believed that what occurs in an employee’s family affects the workplace, and similarly what happens

in the workplace affects the employees' personal lives at many levels. This understanding dovetails the definition that signifies work life as "policies, programs, services, and attitudes within a company that are specific to fostering the well-being of its employees through the effective management of work, family, and personal life" (Lombard, n. d.). This implies that any change in policies, programs or attitudes in the education system affects teachers' personal lives and consequently their families. Teacher family factors provide an in-depth knowledge to understanding how teachers think and behave, because teacher attitudes and behaviour are likely to be affected by family-linked aspects like age and number of children, and spouse or family support (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). Day and Leitch (2001), have recognised that the lives of teachers consist of four interconnecting areas: the cognitive-emotional, and the personal-professional. The distinction promotes the reliance and influence that exist between reasoning (cognition) and feelings (emotions) as well as between the personal and the professional dimensions of teachers where the emotional intelligence is put at the centre of good professional practice, effective teaching and functional decision-making. Both feelings and reasoning wellbeing are right under the influence and guidance of elements from the personal, social and policy characteristics.

Interest in the topic of teacher work life has received increasing attention and recognition in the international and African scholarship or research studies (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Mager, Myers, Maresca, Rupp, & Armstrong, 1986; Malm, 2008; Sloan, 2006; Yost & Williamson, 2010) in the past two decades. General trends and patterns around this topic involve a variety of facets related to teacher working lives. For example, studies have investigated teachers' workloads and satisfaction (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009; Ballet et al., 2006; Butt & Lance, 2005; Fernandes & da Rocha, 2009; Pašková & Valihorová, 2010); teachers' perception of change (Ballet et al., 2006; Blignaut, 2007; Day & Smethem, 2009; Mager et al., 1986; Tabulawa, 1998; Vavrus, 2009); increment and intensification of teacher role and work (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Hargreaves, 1994; Valli & Buese, 2007); and its effects on student progress and outcome (Day, Stobart, Sammons, & Kington, 2006; Hart, 1994; Louis, 1998; Sammons et al., 2007). It has been noticed that there are several factors which shape and direct teacher experiences and work judgements. Yost and Williamson (2010) state that regarding their work lives and constant changes they encounter, teachers from similar social and cultural contexts show similar experiences and perceptions across time, continents and teaching expertise; and their dissatisfaction regarding their work is persistently growing.

### **3.3 Aspects of Teacher Work Life**

A review of teacher work life aspects is necessary to pave the way for understanding their importance in teacher reasoning and behaviour. Though there are many studies conducted on teacher work life around the world, few have focused on rural and semi-rural school teachers in African contexts. This study is an addition to the few African, and particularly Namibian literature, since it is interested in hearing from teachers working in rural and developing school contexts. Three aspects of the working life of teachers viz. personal, school and broader community are discussed under this theme.

The working life of teachers is influenced by the contexts in which they live and work. These contexts are the personal, the school and the wider community aspects surrounding them. In the following sub-topics, these aspects are discussed regarding how they impact on policy interpretation by teachers and therefore their classroom decisions. In the review of literature, it is evident that factors impacting the working lives of teachers are coincidental with those that influence the implementation of the curriculum.

#### **3.3.1 Personal aspects**

An understanding of teacher personal aspects is pertinent for a clear focus in unearthing their individual sense-making. Teacher work life involves the personal characteristics, working aspects, and surrounding circumstances. Teacher personal characteristics has to do with both personal and professional identities, emotions and beliefs; as well as the roles they play inside and outside schools. This section discusses the personal aspects of teachers such as identity, emotions and beliefs.

##### ***3.3.1.1 Identity***

Traditionally, *identity* is seen as a fixed, stable and unchanging asset that one possesses like a nut kernel (Drewes, 2018; Watson, 2006, p. 509;) and is mostly associated with terms such as character, nature, and personality (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Darragh, 2018). However, a new and alternative understanding asserts that identity is a continuous and relational process of identification which has its meanings within a series of connected events between the self and others. This means that it should be considered a ‘resource’ in ways of being for oneself and others; something which is done, but not an attained asset (Avraamidou, 2016; Drewes, 2018; Watson, 2006). It is further contended that identity “emerges in and through narratives,” through constructed and told stories about own lives where “people construct narratives and

narratives construct people” (Watson, 2006 p. 510). In this way it is seen as a continuous reflective self-identity process in working contexts.

However, Gee (2000) defines the concept identity as a “certain kind of person,” an unstable state of being a kind of person at a given time and place that can change from moment to moment in interaction, and from context to context. In this sense identity is neither fixed, nor a permanent state of being, but an ever-evolving state depending on the circumstances surrounding an individual at a particular time. In the case of teachers, identity is built around four perspectives: nature-identity, institution-identity, discourse-identity and affinity-identity. The nature-identity or N-identity is attained from the forces of nature through the process of development and is not influenced by oneself or community; for example, age, gender and ethnicity. Institution or I-identity is acquired because of a calling or an imposition. It results from the recognised authority and this can be influenced by oneself or community. This includes level of qualification, promotion and marital status that a teacher holds. A discourse-identity is derived through ascription of others or interactional accomplishment. It results from the way people talk to and about others in discourse and dialogue, and it can be positive or negative (Avraamidou, 2016; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Examples of identities teachers obtain from others’ discourses include features such as hardworking, dedication, commitment, caring, responsibility, laziness and incompetence. Affinity-identity is attained through participation or sharing by living a sort of ‘lifestyle’ that creates affinities with those who share the lifestyle. That is, through qualities and credits earned of living and behaving as for example, a professional. Features like teachers’ desire and effort for professional advancement, affiliation to teacher unions and behaving according to teachers’ code of conduct are some of affinity identity examples. These characteristics influence the way teachers interpret themselves as persons, and as teachers in explaining what, how and why they do their practice the way they do.

Beltman, Glass, Dinham, Chalk and Nguyen (2015) as well as Grootenboer, Smith, and Lowrie (2006), consider identity as both a personal and social construct since they regard it as an act of how individuals know and label themselves and how they are recognised and looked upon by others. The identity of a person consists of many different elements, the sub-identities, which include beliefs, attitudes, emotions, cognitive capacity and life histories. Multiple identities that people hold are related to what (the roles) and how they perform and interact in the societies (Beltman, et al., 2015). The notion of identity is closely associated with terms such as self or self-concept, emotion (Hargreaves, 1998; O’Connor, 2008),

narrative discourse (Gee, 2000; Somers, 1994; Soreide, 2006), reflection and agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), and is believed that it is a product of both internal influences such as emotions, and external contextual influences like job and life experiences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cohen-Scali, 2003). The concept identity is overall and inclusive because it applies to all individuals regardless of their different careers. It is therefore very important to explicitly discuss teacher identity.

### **3.3.1.2 Teacher identity**

To understand the behaviour and actions of teachers in classrooms it is of utmost importance to take a closer look in the concept teacher identity. Teacher identity guides teacher cognition and decision making for their practice. Teacher identity is described by Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006); Day and Gu (2007); and Sammons et al. (2007) in terms of three individual but interacted dimensions of personal, professional and situated or socially located factors. These factors are related because events and experiences in personal and situated lives are connected to professional performance.

Although teacher identity and teacher *professional identity* appear to be similar and has been interchangeably used, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two concepts. Teacher identity is an umbrella term which involves all aspects regarding the teacher *persona* broad and narrow, inside and outside of school such as the personal, professional, and communal. Teacher professional identity however, is narrower and more specific because it only involves the professional aspects of the teacher person. It is more about the aspects of the teaching professional career for example, the learning and knowledge they have acquired that make them special from other people; and the status and prestige they enjoy or suffer in the society due to the teaching profession they have been trained for. It is what Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) refer to as the useful tool for teachers to develop their own ideas of “how to be, how to act and how to understand their work and place in the society” (p. 178). However, the study undoubtedly acknowledges that teacher professional identity is interrelated to other aspects of teacher identity as Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) remark that teachers derive their professional identity from positions they hold in societies, social interactions with others and from the meanings they make. This confirms what was said earlier, that personal, social and policy factors influence the professional dimension of the teacher person as well as the teaching performance itself (Beltman, et al., 2015). Professional identity in the classroom consists of the way teachers perceive themselves as pedagogues and how they see themselves in relation to their subjects. Positive attitude, self-recognition, and



self-confidence regarding subject knowledge and pedagogy contribute a great deal to teacher professional identity. The explanation presented above therefore makes this study to rely its explanation of teacher professional identity on the idea drawn from Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) and Beltman, et al., (2015) which describes it as an ongoing process with a dynamic nature; a product of multifaceted factors from historical, sociological, psychological, and cultural backgrounds of both personal and contextual dimensions; with a plurality of sub-identities which are related yet different; and relying on teacher agency; as well as an active search for professional development and learning opportunities to achieve their future goals.

*Teacher personal* or demographic *identity* factors play a major role in the process of their own sense-making processes. As the term denotes, teacher identity is specific for those who are in the teaching profession, teachers or educators. It comprises of the multiple aspects of teachers' 'sense of the self' like perceptions of their classroom practice, strategies and approaches they use in teaching, and their role as educators. However, it is a construction of experiences from the personal, professional and contextual lives of teachers gained from daily complex interrelationships with others (Beltman et al., 2015). Day and Gu (2007), argue that the personal dimension of teachers is mainly grounded and related to family and the social roles they play outside their school contexts. They include age, gender, and marital status, being a parent, tenure, program responsibility and educational experiences (Dannetta, 2002; Day & Gu, 2007; Guthrie, 1992; McCracken & Etuk, 1986; Pajak & Blase, 1989; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Sammons et al., 2007). As in the case of any identity, teacher identity includes their personal knowledge, beliefs, values, emotions and practices about teaching, about the subjects they are teaching, and about themselves as educators (Grootenboer et al., 2006). It includes what teachers think and do, but it also encompasses the sense of who they are.

The literature review conducted by Guthrie on factors that impact on the effectiveness of teaching in developing countries has indicated that personal qualities of teachers such as sex, age, socio-economic status, experience and expectations, credentials and qualification, and ability and achievement can have either a positive or negative impact on learner achievement and performance because they influence the way teachers implement the curriculum (Case, 2016; Guthrie, 1992). The finding related to gender indicated that male teachers succeeded in science and mathematics than their female counterparts, while females did better in languages than males. This is not surprising because, tracing back to the missionary and colonial education of system of Namibia as well as that of South Africa, education offered to citizens

was gender-based. This means that education was given along the gender lines, according to the roles that individuals played and positions they held in society. This was also the case at traditional level that the Oshiwambo culture forbade men to do ‘feminine duties’ such as cooking or pounding mahangu, but to be performed by women without rest or any free time to relax (Isaak, 1997). As a result, women were more aligned to domestic roles of motherhood, wife and servanthood; therefore, girls were not encouraged as much as boys to pursue mathematics and science subjects or to proceed up to higher levels of education beyond primary education. Girls who managed to go to higher levels ended up with limited feminine careers such as teaching and nursing (Katzao, 1999; Lehtonen, 1998; Loeb, 2015; Ralaingita, 2008).

*Family role characteristics* included marital status and the number of children teachers have; while *other life roles* involve other potential roles such as being a student, a community leader, church member, coach and other extra jobs played by teachers (Sorensen, McKim & Velez, 2016). As Pajak and Blase (1989) contend, these statuses, with more emphasis to parenthood and marriage, greatly affect teachers’ work in both positive and negative ways. Parent teachers are said to be “more caring, compassionate, empathic, dedicated, insightful, competent and calm” (p. 293). They become more sympathetic and understanding, treating students as they expect their own children to be treated. This soft-heartedness makes them less tolerant to other colleagues’ incompetence and critical of unsympathetic and unkind attitudes to students. As conceded by Rosenholtz (1989) however, teacher parenthood can impact on teacher commitment due to events like childbirths, sicknesses, divorces or deaths, as they leave little time and energy for preparation and teaching. The factor of being married makes teachers’ relationship with students to be more calm, respectful and professional; however, marital problems are said to influence teacher performance in a negative way because they take attention, energy and time to prepare lessons effectively. On the other hand, single and divorced teachers are said to have adequate time with lesson preparations and extra-curricular activities than their married counterparts, but their understanding about parents and students is seen as somehow limited. Although close extended family and friend relationships preoccupy teachers’ thoughts and have control on their time and energy, they benefit teachers as they obtain new ideas and insights through sharing and interacting, making them more flexible, caring and loving (Pajak & Blase, 1989). These elements determine the personal characteristics and type of person a teacher is likely to become.

*Personal characteristics, interests, beliefs and experiences* of teachers are also reported to have positive and some negative effects on their working lives. According to Pajak and Blase (1989), teacher traits include being organised, structured, personally satisfied, ethical, moralistic, just, creative, nonconforming and personifying the work ethic. Teachers foster these traits in their students as they set high expectations for them. Teacher interests pave way for them to look for knowledge wealth and different experiences, and to reach a certain level of expertise in particular areas. Such knowledge and experiences are conveyed to students to enhance their growth and development, and to broaden their world perspectives and understanding. However, if teacher interests and outside activities are not well balanced, they may consume more of their time and energy for lesson preparations and marking of students' work, resulting in less efficiency, more demands and being more autocratic towards students.

*Spiritual beliefs and values* such as love, peace, acceptance and respect for other humans and children have been identified as "sources of stability, meaning and direction" (Pajak & Blase, 1989, p. 299) of teachers' work. They are believed to instil a sense of understanding in teachers to regard and consider themselves as role models for learners, causing them to behave in caring, accepting, patient and trustworthy manners (Taziki, Taziki, Akbari, Saghafi, & Behnampour, 2016). Despite the positive side of teachers' spiritual beliefs and values, there is a tendency of anger, intolerance, guilt and conflict feelings in response to others' unpleasant behaviour. Teachers' childhood or prior experiences regarding the importance of the teaching profession are reported giving a sense of satisfaction, while unpleasant ones cause them to be more sensitive, caring, understanding and tolerant, and make efforts to minimise them among students. Physical health is believed to make teachers more receptive to students and more mentally fit to think easily and quickly in teaching and planning activities. Ill-health is associated with less effectiveness due to reduced time and vitality for teaching, and less student attention and tolerance.

*Socio-economic factors* in teachers' personal lives stem from their professional roles as teachers, however, they are experienced outside schools and they include finance, visibility and social status. Pajak and Blase (1989), argue that the need to maintain financial security is critical mostly to married teachers with children because it makes them to work harder and commit more to get promotions with increased salaries. Problems that stem from financial insufficiency may cause depression, sadness, discouragement, insecurity and other psychological disturbances that can lead to attrition for greener pastures. According to James

(2018) declining household incomes and need to have economic power may intensify pressure on teachers to earn extra income through alternative ways. This increase ‘moonlighting and absenteeism’ and consequently to gradual decline in the quality of education.

The teaching as a noble profession in rural communities attracts high visibility of teachers obliging them to participate in community undertakings and to be realistic with students. Teacher public behaviour is exposed and subjected to community judgments. Some judgments can influence student behaviour in class, thus affecting their performance. The low status and lack of respect from both parents and students attributed to the teaching profession in sub-urban areas make students less responsive to teachers. As a result, teachers develop an inferiority complex that lessens their courage to prepare well and make them less sympathetic and tolerant towards students.

### ***3.3.1.3 Teacher emotions***

According to Wang, Hall, Goetz and Frenzel (2017), emotions are not only critical components of teachers’ overall psychological well-being but also an important factor to predict job satisfaction, burnout level, occupational stress, workplace morale and intention of teachers to quit the profession. These factors impact on teacher reasoning as well as the quality of teaching and engagement outcomes. Hargreaves defines emotions as the “mental states accompanied by intense feeling and bodily changes of a widespread character” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). He further argues that teaching, which is cognitive, is interrelated with emotions; thus, pronounced it as an emotional practice. In the same vein, Zembylas (2004), underlines the inter-dependence existing between reasoning and emotion in the sense that “reasoning presumes emotions” because human reasoning is based on likes and dislikes of individuals; and “emotion presupposes reasoning” because emotions are expressed according to reasoning (p.187). How people perceive or see things around them affects their feelings, which in turn directs the way they behave and act. Therefore, as Saunders (2013) asserts, behaviour and cognition are tightly attached to perception and emotion and therefore cannot be separated.

Sutton and Wheatley (2003), express that emotions are important elements in the lives of teachers, and understanding them helps give more knowledge on teachers and the process of teaching. They are positive when they are enjoyable and satisfying, but negative when they indicate the opposite. Teachers experience positive emotions when they make progress to

achieve own goals, and when they see their learners progress in learning. Emotions of love, caring, joy, satisfaction, pride, pleasure and excitement are rife when they are in a supportive environment; when parents support and respect their judgments, and when learners collaborate with little disturbances. Frequently mentioned positive emotions revealed joy, happiness, and satisfaction; while annoyance, frustration, and anger are the most frequently negative emotions mentioned (Frenzel, Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, Durksen, Becker-Kurz, & Klassen, 2016; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Negative feelings like anger and frustration arise because of learner misbehavior, violation of rule and other factors from school, policy, home or community contexts that impede on teaching. Aspects such as teacher burnout or tiredness and stress due to intensification tend to worsen the situation more. Teachers feel guilty as they find that their efforts to care, meet the demands of increased accountability and intensification of work, and their persona of perfectionism appear to be futile or too demanding to achieve. The sadness feeling is experienced when teachers suffer permanent loss or as they discover that there is nothing that they can do to help improve learners' home life situations.

According to Hargreaves (1998), the practice of teaching is not only about acquiring relevant professional knowledge, skills and attitudes for teachers to operate as “well-oiled machines” or “automatons” (Alexander, Entwistle, & Thompson, 1987, p. 666). However, it also needs “to be charged with positive emotions” for effectiveness and efficiency. Teaching is interwoven in the life of teachers because they invest much of their time and energy in teaching work to such an extent that their personal and professional selves become inseparable from each other (Zembylas, 2004). Emotions are believed to influence the internal states of teachers such as self- and professional efficacy; commitment; job satisfaction; stress and burnout; morale; and intrinsic motivation (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). Positive emotions such as love and caring, affection, joy, satisfaction, pleasure, pride, happiness and excitement serve as indispensable prerequisites to enhance the flow of influence. However, negative emotions such as anger and frustration, disappointment, anxiety, helplessness and powerlessness, guilt, and sadness undermine and reduce teacher interest and intrinsic motivation. The more teachers feel positive, the more the ideas come in their minds for action which is, more creativity, risk-taking and practicing (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

As human beings, teachers need to establish and create rapport with their learners for conducive classroom atmosphere which is very critical for good teaching. Conducive teaching atmosphere is relaxed but challenging, fun, enthusiastic, exciting and inviting; features which can only exist where interactions and relationships are not intimidating and riddled with elements of anxiety or stress from both sides. It is a common human norm not to embrace changes with open hands right away, owed to fear and insecurity of what it brings. It is therefore typical for teachers to be skeptical and resist new educational changes because they come along with some emotional attachments which in most cases are too demanding and pressing on them. Hargreaves (1998, p.838) states that many changes in education do not only demand for teachers to inform their professional knowledge and cognitive skills; however, they also press them to toil or sacrifice for specific emotional investments to create and maintain relationships between them and their learners, parents and administrative authorities. The degree of effectiveness and achievement depend on the amount of positivity of emotions and satisfaction experienced by teachers.

Hargreaves (1998) explained how emotions are positioned and represented in teaching-learning relationships. Teaching as an emotional practice implies that emotions are embedded in teaching practice. Teaching is seen as having the potential to stimulate, shape and show feelings of the teacher; as well as to affect the feelings and behaviour of their immediate ones in work and relationships. Emotions that teachers take to class can excite or bore learners; make teachers open to parents or isolate them; and make them feel supported or doubted by their colleagues. Support that teachers receive makes them feel assured to take risks and try new things while the absence thereof makes them feel more insecure to do so. As a caring profession, teaching calls for emotional sensitivity which demands for extensive emotional labour. Emotional labour denotes an act of sacrificing, deceiving or forging private feelings for the sake of creating a relaxing and favorable state of mind in others by faking and hiding genuine emotions (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Very often teachers trade in their inner selves by pretending to look happy and cheerful even in dark days when they are down, just to be up to par with the situations they are in. As teachers are expected to appear cheerful, they commonly force themselves to encourage or overturn their own true feelings to please others. Emotional labor advantages teaching because most often teachers labor for love and care which yield for productive and interesting classroom situations. However, it can also make teachers vulnerable as they undergo stress and extreme self-sacrifice as change demands and conditions press beyond their personal abilities. Working conditions do also shape emotions

in teaching that the more conditions are satisfactory and pleasing, the better teachers are able to fulfill their moral purposes (Hagenauer, Hascher, & Volet, 2015). Inability to do so would result in the feelings of shame and guilt as teachers feel morally short, insufficient or imperfect.

Vulnerability is described as a fluid emotional experience or a state of being, felt by individuals in a variety of contexts. The experience is determined by how the present conditions of individuals are perceived by others in relations to their identity traits such as beliefs, values and sense of proficiency (Lasky, 2005). In the same vein, Kelchtermans (2005) attached the concept teacher vulnerability to the experiences of teachers of feeling exposed, threatened or questioned about their identity as professionals and moral integrity by others (p. 997) which is theorized as teachers' emotional feelings. According to Kelchtermans (1996), the sense of vulnerability is triggered by different causes or sources. In classrooms, it results from the limited effect teachers have on their learners' learning. They have little or no power to control their classroom conditions as they are expected to meet the demands starting from doing preparation in prescribed ways to conforming to strict rules of classroom teaching. They are powerless to change things. Vulnerability at school level result due to isolation in classrooms, high visibility of their professional activities by other colleagues and parents, and their personal life in the communities. Gao (2008) contends that teacher vulnerability is also prompted by change in education conditions and by change in valuable cultural traditions. Change in cultural traditions distracts the basics of teachers' professional authority and therefore their ability to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of the learners; and therefore, loss of professional security which warrants teacher identity and authority. On the same note, Lasky (2005) underlines that the sense of vulnerability can also be developed by negative feelings of betrayal, and helplessness or powerlessness where teachers found themselves in highly nervous or fearful situations due to threats and intimidations. It is on this note Wang et al., (2017) suggest the discouragement of the performance-oriented teaching programs such as teacher rankings, because it helps to reduce anxiety and anger levels in teachers. Better teaching and emotional well-being are rather enhanced through intervention programs that encourage connectedness with learners and discourage a focus on demonstrating competence or hiding incompetence. Encouragement of mastery-oriented teaching methods such as intra-individual improvement, helps improve teachers' emotions.

#### 3.3.1.4 Teacher beliefs

Teacher beliefs are essential to understanding instructional choices (Gibbons, Villafañe, Stains, Murphy & Raker, 2018). Given that they are difficult to revise (McNeill, Katsh-Singer, González-Howard & Loper, 2016; Pajares, 1992), they dictate how teachers process new information and thus, influence the decision-making process about classroom instruction. The *belief concept* has many interpretations and explanations and its definition is therefore hard to conclude. According to Pajares (1992), belief is “any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase, ‘I believe that...’” (p. 113). Beliefs influence human natural tendency to act and behave in specific ways at particular times and contexts. They are constructed in the human mind as representations of valid, true and credible reality an individual hold from one’s personal experience and have the capacity to guide thinking and behaviour. He and Levin (2008) explain that teacher beliefs are teachers’ practical and personal theories premised on their prior life experiences deduced from non-teaching activities and teaching experiences as they design lessons and implement them in classrooms.

According to Pajares (1992), beliefs have the descriptive, the evaluative and the prescriptive elements. They are descriptive because they have the capacity to define and explain how people or things look like and how events happened. The evaluative element manifests through its judgmental and analytical nature, whereas their prescriptive element lies in their ability to make decisions and conclusions. In addition, Pajares (1992) describes that beliefs are combinations of cognitive, affective and behavioral human domains. This is because beliefs include knowledge and emotions that lead to actions. The evaluative and the emotional features of beliefs make them unique and different from knowledge which is based on objective facts with no emotions attached.

It has been understood in literature that *beliefs and knowledge* are closely related and are difficult to differentiate, yet they are different. Literature has tried to identify various characteristics to make a distinction between the two concepts. While some scholars understand that beliefs are part of constructs that describe the structure and content of a person’s thinking that are presumed to drive his/her actions (Bryan & Atwater, 2002), some view knowledge structure as at the heart of the ‘thought’ in thought-to-practice because of their more reflecting nature than beliefs (Pajares, 1992). Some explanations view knowledge as an umbrella body that subsume beliefs, “idiosyncratic reserve of skills, information,



experiences, beliefs and memories” (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004, p. 70); whereas some see knowledge and beliefs as overlapping concepts (Murphy et al., 2004). Referring to the ideas of Abelson and Nesor (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Pajares, 1992), the nature characteristics or features that differentiate beliefs from knowledge are highlighted. These features are: non-consensuality, existence beliefs, alternativity, affective and evaluative aspects of beliefs, unboundedness, and the episodic material.

*Non-consensuality* refers to the nature that although beliefs are disputable, they are very fundamental and therefore are inflexible, static and less dynamic (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Pajares, 1992) and are immune to contradiction (Ertmer, 2005). Unlike knowledge, beliefs are idiosyncratic, which means that they do not need a consensus to be agreed upon. This yields in individuals having the same knowledge but different beliefs, that particular knowledge (Ertmer, 2005). They are difficult to change irrespective of how the argument for change may look convincing and reasonable. This is confirmed by Gibbons et al. (2017) that reform intentions which are not compatible with teachers’ fundamental beliefs and knowledge about the subject matter, or teaching and learning in their subject area often decline the results significantly. This implies that teachers may hold knowledge of a constructivist philosophy of learning however, they may still not implement the constructivism-oriented practices. Along with the multidimensional nature of reforms and the speed at which they are disseminated, contradictory beliefs held by teachers make it difficult to determine the extent of influence particular beliefs make on instruction; obscure teachers; and result in a halt to the growth of the reform (Lawson, Vosniadou, Van Deur, Wyra & Jeffries, 2018). However, despite their static and less dynamic nature, beliefs are subjected to change through gestalt shift or conversion. According to Kagan (cited in Ertmer, 2005), teacher change in beliefs occurs when the adequacy of their existing beliefs is challenged with new beliefs, and when the new beliefs cannot be assimilated in the existing beliefs. These challenges make teachers to examine, question and become dissatisfied with their existing beliefs (Ertmer, 2005); and, as Guskey (2002) puts it, teacher change process is gradual, takes time and effort to happen.

The feature of *existential presumption* or *existence belief* is described by Bryan and Atwater (2002) as “an assumption about the existence or nonexistence of an entity that may be seen as immutable and beyond individual control or knowledge” (p. 824). These assumptions are personally related, unquestionable, taken for granted personal truths held by individuals about the self, others and events. They are formed because of happenstance direct and indirect

experience or through a series of sequential events in the life of an individual. According to (Pajares, 1992), some are derived, and some are un-derived beliefs. Derived beliefs are obtained from interacting with other people like friends and family members whereas un-derived beliefs were obtained from the direct interaction with the belief object, that is, from own experience. Un-derived beliefs are more personal and therefore are closely attached to one's own identity forming the core of one's sense of self and "to question them is to question one's own sanity" (Pajares, 1992, p. 318) unlike the derived beliefs. It has been noted that beliefs acquired earlier in one's life become more central, and the more their centrality the more they become personal and static. They are difficult to change because people know and are sure of what they have heard, seen, felt or tasted.

The characteristic of *centrality* is explained in terms of the connectedness of beliefs. This refers to how a belief affects and influences other beliefs in the belief system. (Lawson et al., 2018) define a belief system as a "structure covers a domain of knowledge and is activated, depending on the text, to interpret incoming information" or a person's "working model of the world" (p. 8). Beliefs encountered at an early stage of life through personal experience are stronger and central because they are intertwined with an individual thought and feelings causing implications and consequences on other beliefs. Beliefs of such nature are referred to as core beliefs, while beliefs which have less effect on others are referred to as peripheral beliefs (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Ertmer, 2005; Pajares, 1992). Alluding to the human atom analogy of Rokeach, Ertmer (2005) has outlined five types of beliefs according to their central-peripheral nature. *Type A* beliefs are the inner, central core of a human belief atom, highly connected and strongly implicating other beliefs. Mostly they are obtained through personal experiences and social consensus with significant others. They are part of an individual identity and are highly resistant to change (McNeill et al., 2016). *Type B* beliefs are also deduced from direct experience but unlike the latter, they are more personal and private, and therefore they are not shared with others. This non-sharing with others makes these beliefs untouchable and unchallengeable by other beliefs from others, causing them to be difficult to change. *Type C* beliefs are based on dependability, trustworthiness and reliability of individuals or authorities advocates for change. Although they are resistant to change, a compromise can be reached. *Type D* beliefs closer to the periphery of the belief atom comes from authorities that people believe in. Since they are not well connected, they are prone to change provided that the persuasion for change comes from a relevant authority. *Type E* forms the outer or peripheral part of the belief atom consisting of insignificant beliefs

related to personal liking or preference. They are less connected and can therefore easily change upon persuasion.

According to Nespor (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Ertmer, 2005; Pajares, 1992), beliefs reside, depend and draw from the *episodic memory* of an individual, while knowledge information is stored semantically or in the meaning of events. Prior experiences encountered in life form *photographic guiding images* in human memories that later serve as *intuitive screens* through which new information is cleared and approved (Pajares, 1992). This means that beliefs are based on past education experiences such as former teachers and learning experiences, and other events from both personal and cultural ways of learning such as childhood upbringing, cultural dances and songs, literature and media. Beliefs based on clear, powerful and detailed memories particularly in earlier life are likely to structure, influence and inspire how an individual will learn, use knowledge and more importantly do practice in the future.

Beliefs are believed to have an ‘*unbounded*’ tendency. This implies that unlike knowledge which is based on objective reasoning, beliefs are unbounded in the sense that their appropriateness and relevance to reality rejects logical reasoning. This nature allows beliefs to be extended and transferred to different contexts beyond where they are initially formed, making it easy to be flexibly applied to new situations and problems (Ertmer, 2005; Pajares, 1992). *Alternativity* refers to the invention of alternative and better conditions of learning or doing a particular job differently from the condition one has experienced. Individuals who have unfavourable experiences like hardships or embarrassments for certain events may choose to spare others from similar experiences by trying to create better fantasy situations for such experiences. For example, teachers holding deficit beliefs of their learners may expect low from them and thus offer less cognitive challenging and demanding learning experiences to such learners (McNeill et al., 2016).

Although the knowledge system has also the *affective and the evaluative aspects*, they are said to be stronger in belief systems. The affective and evaluative component include the feelings, moods, the subjective and judgmental parts that are premised on personal preferences (Bryan & Atwater, 2002). The feeling and value that one attaches to an object determine the way, time and energy expended on it.

Like the concept of beliefs, defining and conceptualizing the notion of *teacher belief* is also problematic; hence Pajares (1992) referred to it as a “messy construct” because the meanings and interpretations given are different from one scholar to another. The concept has been

used inconsistently as many scholars on teacher beliefs have defined it in different ways according to the purposes of their studies in relation to teachers' propositions about their work and other educational matters. According to Luft and Roehling (2007), the concept teacher belief is considered as more or less similar with attitudes; interchanged with theories and philosophies because they are outcomes of personal construct; or equated to knowledge because both guide teacher thinking and behaviour. Some studies make a distinction between teacher beliefs and teacher perspectives, where the latter is seen as a broader term inclusive of beliefs and knowledge (Pajares, 1992); whereas some studies understand that belief and knowledge are parts of teacher cognition (Gursoy, 2013). The definition of a belief concept by Rokeach given earlier serves as the bedrock of many teacher belief constructs. For example, Kagan (1992) defines teacher beliefs as "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught" (p.65); while de Vries, Van de Grift, and Jansen (2013), and Gursoy (2013) have adopted Borg's definition that a belief is a "proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative...accepted as true by the individual and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment...and serves as a guide to thought and behaviour" (pp. 214, 64).

According to De Vries et al. (2013) teacher beliefs about teaching and learning are either subject matter or student oriented. Other terms used to describe these belief preferences include content versus student; student learning versus transmission of knowledge; traditional versus process-oriented; and reception/direct transmission versus constructivist views of teaching and learning. The subject matter orientation has been described by Hargreaves (2000) as a traditional "transmission teaching," more based on lecturing and recitation, note-taking, question and answer method, and aim to cover the content for examination. Through transmission view knowledge is passed from knowledgeable expert teachers to novice inexperienced learners whose individual needs are a matter of less concern. On the contrary, a student orientation towards teaching and learning foregrounds the constructivist views of knowledge and learning (Prawat & Floden, 1994; Vavrus, 2009). It stresses the development of skills and competencies through discovery of new information; active, participatory and collaborative learning in groups by learners; and employment of various learning strategies to acknowledge individual learning styles and differences.

### **3.3.2 School or work aspects**

A review of school aspects is aimed to highlight the work-related conditions in which teachers work to reveal how they impact on their reasoning and decision-making. School contextual factors have a substantial link with the turnover intentions of teachers. They include aspects such as teacher influence, safety and legal rights, administrative support, student behaviour, culture and staff interactions, roles and responsibilities, and facilities. School facilities refer to the physical work places of teachers and the resources available to them (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). Although teachers are physically working in school and classroom contexts, their working conditions extend to involve the psychological and socio-political wider contexts, the immediate communities in which schools are located and their personal living conditions. This suggests that many changes and demands befalling at society, political, school community or family context levels are likely to affect the working conditions of teachers explicitly or implicitly. Better working conditions are crucial in teachers' working lives (Ekundayo, 2010).

The main purpose of any education reform is to ensure that the standard of student learning and achievement has been raised and improved among students, calling for increased commitment and teaching expertise from teachers and more vibrant, complex, interventionist management by principals and other stakeholders to ensure that schools continue to develop (Day, 1999). Studies conducted around teachers' perceptions on changing working conditions report that teachers experience varied, numerous and concurrent changes in their working conditions at both school and classroom levels, more in subject content and new curriculum, methodology and new administration duties (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009). Despite the efforts made directed towards teacher motivation and capacity improvement, it has been observed that teacher morale, self-confidence, self-efficacy and satisfaction towards the job has declined in many countries because of changes in both occupational and organisational working conditions (Day, 1999; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). These attributed changes are a result of the theoretical "intensification thesis" of teachers' work, which puts pressure on schools and teachers to increase demands and expectations by policy-makers and society (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Hargreaves, 1994).

According to Hargreaves (1994), intensification refers to "a bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations and controls concerning what teachers do and how much they should do within the school day" (p. 108). For Jenkins (2017), job intensification is a

major influence on teachers deciding not to engage with curriculum change. Ballet et al. (2006), and Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) understand that intensification pose many problem characteristics in teachers' work as follows. Firstly, it minimises teachers' relaxation or down time during the working day. This leaves teachers having reduced time to keep up with developments in their discipline areas and little time to review and improve their teaching skills. This results in teachers being deskilled and de-professionalised. Secondly, intensification creates chronic and persistent sense of work overload. Teachers become preoccupied with extra administrative work and only little time is available for them to do such work. This has an effect in teachers' personal judgments and involvement in, and control over long-term planning being reduced and undermined. Thirdly, it affects the quality of student results and achievement negatively as teachers work in isolation because time pressure does not allow them to consult colleagues for feedback, collaboration and sharing of ideas. In addition, time constraint does also inhibit thorough articulation of all subject content areas with students as teachers tend to be tempted to select the core curriculum contents in an examination-based style. Lastly, intensification creates excessive teacher dependency on external expertise and therefore the reduction of teacher autonomy and overall quality of service. This demotes a sense of self-trust, self-efficacy and self-confidence because it creates doubts about one's own competence and expertise.

In attempt to understand the significance of the reformed working conditions, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) have deliberated the sources of such changes which they refer to as 'calls' for change or for meeting demands and expectations. These calls are categorised into three groups namely, school-external calls, self-imposed calls and calls from the school organisation. What make them different from each other is the content and the type of legitimacy behind them. Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008; 2009) describe *school-external calls* as perceived authoritative demands that come 'from above' seen as legitimate and exuding greater authority, compelling and unavoidable. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of authority conceded with these demands, teachers hardly find these calls difficult to ignore or even to question them in fear of losing their professional recognition and reputation. The school-external calls demand that teachers must be accountable at all times and that they must prove their competence (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). This makes teachers dependent and directed by external powers undermining their self-confidence. Disregarding and not implementing these change demands result in schools not being recognised as 'good schools' and their survival being at stake. That is, their names will be tarnished, end up in bad books

of either administration authorities or communities, causing them to be less attractive to new students and staff recruits because they will be seen as having incompetent teachers who are not capable of effecting changes in demand. Parents may move their children and register them to other schools, and schools will lose funds which are allocated according to the number of students they register. However, although teachers are said to acknowledge the value of such drastic changes, they have highlighted the negative implication of succession of the new curricula, lack of teaching materials and time pressure affecting their working conditions (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009).

Another perceived source for change is teachers themselves, through the *self-imposed calls* which is found to be positive (Jenkins, 2017). Again, in their study, Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) find out that some teachers can become the source of their own increased workload, by formulating their own initiatives in trying to meet professional standards of pedagogical perfection. This understanding emanates from own normative beliefs of what a teacher perceives as good education, and as a result they pitilessly put themselves under obligations to ensure that they give the best education possible to their students. Such teachers believe that job challenges make them feel like proper teachers, and the more the demands they encounter, the more they feel obliged to meet the demands, and adapt themselves to such life. Adapting refers to abiding to pressure increment, internalising and understanding of external demands as an internal appeal to their personal standards of pedagogical perfection. Calls for change are evaluated in terms of students benefit gains from them. The condition is that, as long as calls for change benefit students despite whether or not change is significant or time very much limited, ignoring and refusing it is impossible because it is a moral duty.

The last perceived calls of change stipulated are those that originate from school working cultures, values and norms in which teachers develop a working consensus (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009). A school working consensus is a set of implicit and explicit rules and conventions colleagues in a school apply on a daily basis regarding how they interact with each other, with the teaching job and with changes in their professional situations (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). Schools where teachers share common strong beliefs and norms for good education likely have their teachers responding positively to calls for change as they develop the sense of willingness to innovation and pedagogical perfection. For the reason of collegiality, collaboration and sense of community among each other, teachers feel obliged to work hard towards achieving the standards demanded by the call for change. However, due to the need of being recognised and/or retain one's prestige from colleagues, some teachers tend

to put pressure on themselves in order to prove that they are hard-working and competent fellows. Furthermore, as explained earlier, demands placed on schools and teachers also come from what Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) refer to as “multiple calls for loyalty” (p. 1153), from the social contexts in which schools are situated and teachers work; for example, the communities, local governments and leaders, regional educational leaders, and learners, therefore making the situation challenging and uncomfortable for teachers. This implies that calls for change occur within the context of schools in which teachers’ work do not just come in void, because of many interconnected factors.

Literature has widely discussed school conditions in relation to many aspects of teaching namely, teacher commitment (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Riehl & Sipple, 1996); student learning and outcomes (Hirsch & Emerick, 2005; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007); teacher shortage and turnover (Buckley et al., 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005) and curriculum implementation (O’Sullivan, 2002). According to Leithwood and McAdie (2007), school working condition factors have a substantial influence on teachers’ internal states. Internal states refer to feelings and knowledge of teachers for example, individual and collective sense of professional efficacy, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, stress and burnout, morale, engagement or disengagement, and pedagogical content knowledge. These serve as the immediate causes of what teachers do. School working condition factors include school cultures, structures, relations with the community, and functioning processes.

*School culture* is described as sets of beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things shared among members of school communities that operate unconsciously, or the different realities that people construct for themselves, the social habitats involving the informal momentary and hidden as well as the visible and the official (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994). School cultures provide the social and psychological contexts where teachers collectively develop a sense of practice, professional efficacy, and professional community. This is considered crucial because it reduces uncertainty, promote autonomy and provide opportunities for teachers to learn and become successful (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Steyn, 2015; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). They are also seen as essential preconditions that many teachers may prefer to exchange for higher salaries (Buckley et al., 2005). School cultures also include affiliation, which refers to a sense of belonging and occurs when individuals feel attached to others in their environments. Buchanan (1974; 2015), asserts that teachers become more devoted when school norms and values promote such interpersonal connections. This



has been confirmed in the study by Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) that teachers who have a considerable amount of face-to-face contacts with their principals and other colleagues develop an increased sense of commitment and respect than those who are deprived of such contacts. Collegiality helps teachers acquire a variety of knowledge and skills as they interact with each other, so as the appreciation of their performance by their principals. Collegial or peer support takes different forms like that of professional concern, feedback, and emotional support.

*Support* at schools is a very important element perceived to foster job satisfaction, commitment, and morale in teachers. Teachers need support from the administration, other teachers and students. Many scholars emphasise the fact that principal support is very critical because it lessens teacher stress and burnout, and influence collegial environment because it fosters shared goals, values, and professional growth (Jenkins, 2017; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Steyn, 2015; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). School administrators need to involve teachers in collaborative activities that are crucial for the enhancement of their continuous professional development (Steyn, 2015). Teachers expect administrators to minimise paperwork, to support them in disputes with parents, and to reduce interferences in their classroom activities (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Other important elements of support highlighted by Singh and Billingsley (1998) that avoid teacher resistance to school directives and innovations are fairness, dependability and consistency regarding caring and handling of disciplinary issues. The consistency of the school mechanism on control and management, and how it intercedes and resolves disputes or matters regarding learner behaviour is seen as saving teachers from anxiety and allowing them more time to concentrate on their basic teaching duties.

Another important element of support to ensure better teacher working conditions is the availability of necessary resources at schools that facilitates and makes teaching enjoyable. According to Firestone and Pennell (1993), work resources are the “material and institutional means through which teachers are able to accomplish their tasks and experience intrinsic rewards” (p. 508). They further identify five resources namely, an orderly environment, administrative support, adequate physical conditions, instructional resources, and reasonable workloads as very important for the conducive school working environment. Lack of resources in a school contribute to teacher job dis-satisfaction and later to defection (Buckley et al., 2005, Tahseen & Hadi, 2015)

Relevance or sense of purpose refers to the “process of meaning-making” (Tahseen & Hadi, 2015; Firestone, Rosenblum, & Webb, 1987, p. 7) to the work done and other school activities. It originates from a sense of purpose in teacher’s work, occurring when one has an intrinsic worth of the job (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988). Teachers’ sense of obligation increases as they realise that the work, they do make some important contributions to the overall aims of the profession, school and student achievement. Appropriate expectations have been considered as one of the most powerful factors affecting performance in both teachers and students. It refers to “an extent to which administrators make instruction and achievement a priority for both students and teachers” by “providing special academic incentives for students and similar incentives and strong in-service programs for teachers” (Firestone et al., 1987, p. 8). According to Firestone and Rosenblum (1988), high expectations that teachers hold for their students raise dedication in students to achieve more, similarly those hold by the principal for teachers. This can be achieved by defining goals and linking them clearly to the achievement, creating support for instruction and providing constructive feedback.

In addition, the difference of instructional press or extent to which instruction and achievement are made a priority; and the upkeep of high instructional expectations for teachers in schools, determines the nature of the school culture (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). Schools with increased instructional press, that is, schools where principals regularly monitor and attend to instruction have their teachers thrive more in teaching (Tahseen & Hadi, 2015). Along with that is the ‘academic press’ incentives that serve to empower teacher professionally. It involves the process of designing and managing in-service professional development programs for teachers at both school and district levels. Influence as another precondition for school culture refers to “the extent to which teachers have an opportunity to shape the decisions” (Firestone et al., 1987, p. 8) in matters that concern their work regarding organising and determining the procedures in relation to what, how and when to carry them out. Pappa, Moate, Ruohotie-Lyhty, and Eteläpelto (2017) refer the similar notion to teacher agency, which they define as “the way in which teacher intention and understanding is enacted within a particular environment, whether physical, emotional, social, pedagogical or professional” (p.2). They stress its usefulness to drawing attention to the sensitive space between an individual’s hopes and plans, and their realized or realizable potential. The more the teacher agency is significantly

constrained, the more the teaching process is less successful and negatively impact on teachers' well-being.

In the same vein Rosenholtz (1989) states that influence has to do with a sense of teacher control, autonomy and discretion over their own work. It “involves the extent to which work provides substantial freedom, independence, and individual discretion in carrying out tasks” (p. 423). She further stipulates that professional freedom and discretion improve teacher performance, motivation and a sense of responsibility. Both Firestone and Pennell (1993), and Graham (1996) define the concept autonomy in terms of Hackman and Oldham as workers' self-determination to plan work and activities and determine the procedures on how to carry them out. It refers to the degree of participation allowed to teachers and the influence over the decision-making regarding the work they have. With autonomy, teachers feel in a position to decide what, how and when to teach a subject content for effective learning. Firestone and Buchanan (2015) and Pennell (1993) elaborate that teachers become more motivated and committed as they experience personal responsibility and accountability for the outcome of own efforts. As teachers “experience personal responsibility for the outcomes of work, believing that their performance is attributable directly to their own efforts” (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 423), they align success for student achievement to their own input through effective teaching and not to others' efforts. Therefore, it is very important to praise, respect and acknowledge teachers' initiatives and efforts they make, for them to see that they are not just working hard to be elevated. For example, to just acknowledge and praise the principal or the management for the job well done regarding school or learner success and overlook an important fact that it is always the teachers who are at the forefront, greatly demoralises and discourages teachers. As Buchanan (2015) and Buckley et al. (2005) contend, absence of autonomy and responsibility can result in teacher job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and attrition. These may negatively influence teacher self-perception and consequently the way they interpret changes.

Few studies have looked at how school structures or infrastructures influence the performance and teaching effectiveness of teachers. In his study to see how teachers in Chicago and Washington D. C. assess their working conditions regarding overcrowding, availability and sufficiency of facilities, Schneider (2003) found that many teachers were not happy with their working conditions. The availability of facilities, including the adequacy and resourcefulness thereof, are believed to have had a very great influence on the process of teaching and learning because they make it easy or difficult for teachers to facilitate learning

opportunities for learners (Buchanan, 2015; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). Facilities like well-equipped science laboratories, music, and art classrooms as well as recreational facilities increase learners' mental and physical well-being and subsequently their academic success. Coupled with school facilities are physiological factors such as safety, indoor air quality, thermal comfort, classroom lighting and noise levels. For Tehseen & Hadi (2015), school safety means the school conditions that impact the psychological and physical well-being of teachers and students. It also includes factors related to classroom misconduct and violence. These factors, if happen to be of poor quality, have the great potential to negatively influence the health of both teachers and learners; leading to poor quality of performance and achievement.

### **3.3.3 Broader community aspects**

An overview of broader community aspects is necessary to help understand their influence on the emotions, thoughts and behaviour of teachers regarding the implementation of learner-centered approach. Literature has revealed that factors at broader community can influence teachers' working lives. These factors have the potential to impact on teacher self-efficacy and commitment to the profession, as they can increase or decrease anxiety and frustration that may lead to the decision of either staying or leaving the job. Broader community factors affecting teacher working lives include education policies, social status of the teaching profession (expectations, stereotypes, humiliations and insults in the public) and parental and community involvement (Buckley et al., 2005; Hamunye, 2008).

*Government education policies* that put an increased pressure of accountability and administrative work have been reported to irritate and bring uneasiness and discomfort in teachers. Misunderstanding over policies, absence of clear and precise information coupled with insensitivity of education bureaucracies are confusing among teachers (Buckley et al., 2005; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Too many policies advocating curriculum changes (Coburn, Hill & Spillane, 2016; Jenkins, 2017), and inadequate orientation opportunities to familiarise teachers to changes due to limited funds and time for cascading style deprive some teachers of the useful information they need to effectively enact the curriculum changes as demanded. The demand of what teachers are not familiar with consequently lowers and diminishes their courage, self-efficacy and confidence to carry on because it damages their self-perception and identity as professionals. For Coburn et al., (2016), many accountability policies only influence the content to be taught however, they fail to improve how it should be taught.

They also attempt to force or induce changes in teacher practice through mandates, incentives and sanctions; or influence how school leaders influence teachers to change their practice via normative pressure. This results in the increase in system gaming because, teachers end up making changes in their teaching practices which are mostly superficial because of their less engagement with professional learning opportunities. According to Buchanan (2015), accountability in teaching and learning is marked by a focus on making the individual quantifiable and holding a teacher accountable by comparing them to others within the frame of labour market. The main purpose is to rank and compare effectiveness, however, it poses a disadvantage that it de-professionalizes teacher work, devalues teacher autonomy and authentic collegiality, and complicates the notion of teacher agency.

*Social status of the profession:* The escalation of public criticism of teachers and schools, including some education policies negatively portray teachers in the media, and the related decrease in respect for the teaching profession in general, impact on teacher self-esteem and status in the society and largely on their professional identity. Teachers are regularly stigmatised and ridiculed in public even in the presence of their learners, considered as “in need of improvement or failing learners” (Buckley et al., 2005, p. 1111). This low prestige of teaching, together with other challenges like poor compensation and unbearable working conditions in many schools, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa have decreased the determination of teachers (Ware, 1992; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011). It has been realised in many countries that better students avoid the teaching profession for other attractive careers that will provide them job opportunities with better working conditions and remunerations than the teaching profession. This leaves teaching in the hands of lower achieving students who could not compete for other better job opportunities (Ware, 1992, p.32). In addition, while some experienced and more knowledgeable teachers resign from the service for other jobs (Tye & O’Brien, 2002), many are leaving the teaching service as a result of promotions to high positions within the education sector, taking with them their acquired knowledge and skills (Ottevanger et al., 2005).

*Parental and community involvement:* The term community refers to parents, but it also includes the fields of businesses and industries, so their involvement in the implementation of education to achieve quality education. For Kusumaningrum, Ulfatin, Maisyaroh, Triwiyanto and Gunawan (2017), the role and *participation of parents and communities* depend on their needs and socio-cultural beliefs. However, parents and community support has been considered as one of the major key factors leading to school effectiveness. Some of the roles

played by communities in improving education quality at schools include advisory agency, supporting agency, controlling agency and mediating agency.

The socio-cultural beliefs of parents and community towards education and teachers has an impact on the performance of teachers. How teachers understand and perceive themselves as teachers is related to their positioning, and how they are stereotyped in particular contexts (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). Teachers are constantly combating public stereotypes by their communities. They are seen as enjoying high remunerations and having numerous holidays while doing easier and relaxing jobs than many other careers. They are dealing with a constant “professional paradox”, that is, they are highly expected to deliver good results by their communities, yet they are positioned in lower social status and esteem (Buckley et al., 2005). It also depends on the manner they are treated by significant others; the extent to which authority and power allow them; and how they feel succeeding with this power and their role as teachers (Avraamidou, 2016; Moore, 2008). It has been discovered that teachers from marginalised groups are “highly visible others” who act as “interlopers” and are therefore hardly distanced from their “otherness” (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005, p. 117) by their students and colleagues. Inferior stereotyped teachers experience a sense of powerlessness and deference to others deemed superior and find it difficult to make useful social or professional connections. However, superior stereotyped individuals may take it for granted that high social and professional status is their right even if their actions and practices prove otherwise.

Rosenholtz (1989) argues that the academic development and progress of learners can be greatly influenced by their socio-economic backgrounds and learning conditions and facilities prevailing in their homes. However, since schools can do very little to change learner home situations and the availability of resources, what they request parents to do in their interactions with learners can impact on learners’ learning. Attempt to increase parental involvement and participation can include parental supervision of learners’ work, classroom involvement through visits by invitations and home tutoring. Parental support and involvement in learning and progress of their children have a direct impact on teacher efficacy and professional achievement (Hamunyela, 2008). It poses an advantage to both teachers and learners because parents are reflected as supplementary teaching resources that support teacher attempts and facilitates teaching-learning process. Through discussions and interactions with teachers, parents also widen and expand teachers’ knowledge that will help them to understand learners’ problems and needs better, and consequently develop an

individual rather than a homogenous ‘one-size-fits-all’ way out to learner problems. The sharing of thoughts and ideas clears uncertainties, misunderstandings and distrust that normally fill the space and create the distance between the two (parents and teachers) if they do not communicate. Involved parents recognise the hard work and proficiency of teachers and therefore develop a sense of respect for them. According to Buckley et al. (2005), children whose parents partake in their learning do also develop a positive attitude towards schooling and their engagement in school activities become higher than those whose parents do not.

### **3.4 The Concept Curriculum**

This theme defines the concept curriculum and explains its different elements and perspectives. It reveals the nature and the perspective of the learner-centered curriculum adopted. This knowledge facilitates a clear understanding of what is actually experienced by teachers in classrooms and how their thoughts and emotions are directly impacted.

#### **3.4.1 The curriculum**

The concept curriculum is derived from the Latin word *curro* or *currere* which denotes a race, a track or a racetrack. It talks about the track or pathway that prepares learners for life; the educational pathway or trail learners have to pass through under the guidance of teachers to maturity (Benne & Muntyan, 1951). Literature has defined the concept “curriculum” in contested narrow and broad ways, and the meaning signified depends on the context in which it is demarcated, its limitations, and approaches used in the enactment of its process according to the understanding and beliefs that individuals hold for it. The definition or the ‘characterisation’, as some scholars (Schubert in Carl, 2012, p. 29; Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000) refer to it, ascribed to the concept determines the broad extent of demands and expectations on the teaching-learning process and the meanings and characteristics attached to it. This means that some authors in attempt to define what the curriculum is, instead list the characteristics of the curriculum they intend to explain. In limited ways curriculum is defined as “permanent subjects that embody essential knowledge,” and as “all planned learning for which schools are responsible” (Marsh, 2009). It can be referred to all teaching aimed to meet the needs of learners, and at times it is equated to particular subject syllabus, scheme of work or content (Bertram, Stielau, Parker, Green, & Fotheringham, 2010). These kinds of definitions narrow down the curriculum because they concentrate only on certain aspects of

the curriculum and ignore others; for example, they stress only certain school subjects and formal learning experiences, leaving behind other learning experiences in informal settings. They are criticised for making the curriculum too limiting, unbalanced and deficient of the wider vision of relevant skills and competencies (Carl, 2012; Marsh, 2009).

A curriculum can be designed at different levels, depending on the nature and extent of activities involved namely: macro, meso and micro levels. However, as asserted by Carl (2012), these terms prove challenging and problematic in making a clear distinction among them due to their relativity and dependability. Therefore, some authors prefer terms based on specific levels, sectors and areas at which the curriculum is designed such as the *institutional* or school curriculum which comprises all subjects offered by a particular institution; the *course curriculum* which include subjects offered for a specific course, for example the Advanced Certificate in Education teacher courses; or the *subject curriculum* which describes the objectives, goals, content, methods, assessment procedures etc. for a particular subject offered, such as Life Science.

In broad extensive terms, Kelly (2009) defines the curriculum as “the totality of the experiences the pupil has as a result of the provision made” (p. 13). This definition is premised on the understanding that the curriculum has many different aspects on how it can be understood. Scholars such as Hoadley and Jansen (2009), Kelly (2009) and Carl (2012) stipulate different types of curricula namely, educational, total, hidden, planned or received, and formal or informal. The curriculum is considered educational when its educational position is reasonable and justifiable. This implies that it must have different features required to meet educational demands. A total curriculum is boundless to a specific learning content or program; however, it is whole and inclusive, accommodating overall rationale for the educational program. The hidden curriculum includes imbedded attitudes and values that are communicated to students in covert and implicit ways. The intended learning content prescribed in different subject syllabi make up the planned or official curriculum, but what is actually transmitted to students due to intentional or unintentional actions of teachers by omitting or adding information make up the received or the actual curriculum. The formal curriculum involves the formal activities which are officially allocated in the periods of the teaching timetable, whereas the informal curriculum takes account of informal or extracurricular activities which mostly take place after school hours, during weekends, leisure times or school holidays. Bourdillon and Storey (2002) note the idea that the curriculum does not only describe the subjects being taught, but also the methods used, the resources available



and the wider environment in which the teacher must work. Attached to that are the underlying principles of access, equity, equality, and democracy as well as the links between labour market and vision of the society in terms of required skills, knowledge and values.

Based on the nature of strategies or approaches assumed, Bernstein (cited in Hoadley & Jansen, 2009) differentiates between competence and performance curriculum models. The competence curriculum is interested in the promotion of learners' inherent competences and abilities, and so teaching and learning emphasise on learners and encourage the use of their daily experiences, knowledge and skills, and application thereof in real life situations. The school learning and real-life learning are equally considered worthwhile regardless of where they take place; be it in formal or informal settings. The competence model is learner-centred in nature because it bestows learners with control over their own learning in terms of what, when and the pace of their learning. Teachers play a guiding and facilitating role because teaching and learning are more of a process and personal. In a competence model, knowledge themes are horizontally planned because it is understood that they do not essentially relate to each other. Learner differences and variations are embraced in terms of learning strategies, pace of learning and expression of results. Assessment is grounded on the confidence that every learner can succeed, and therefore it is based on what a learner achieves and knows and not on what he or she cannot perform. On the contrary, a performance curriculum is content-specific and teacher-centred. It stipulates the content to be learnt and order it should be taught. Since this model emphasises formal knowledge, teaching and learning are designed to take place in formal places where learners' influence over the selection, arrangement and speed of learning is very limited. Learning is seen as a product, and therefore learners are evaluated and assessed based on what they accomplish correctly and on what they are not capable to grasp and master.

Bertram et al. (2010) makes a distinction between a curriculum as a plan and a curriculum as a process. It becomes a plan, product or document when it stipulates all that teachers must follow such as policies, aims, objectives, and content of what to be covered in the execution of their duties. It hopefully assumes that teachers will follow the plan as it is without changes or alterations. Teachers are seen as objective technicians (Aoki, Carson, Favaro, & Berman, 1983; Tabulawa, 1998) or builders of a building who have to follow the designed plan without any bias or emotions attached to it as opposed by scholars such as Hargreaves (1998) and Zembylas (2004). In its broad sense a curriculum is understood as a process or practice when it includes a plan, but at the same time acknowledges that teachers are active agents

who interpret and implement the curriculum in their own teaching contexts. Teacher choices and decisions on how to enact the curriculum are thus based on their interpretations, contexts and resources available in respective contexts. This opinion backs up Wedekind's metaphor (quoted in Bertram et al., 2010) which compares teachers to builders who have great power on the building process which is, the actual implementation of the building plan unlike the architects or the planners. Availability of resources, teacher knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and preferences play a major role in curriculum plan interpretation and greatly influence their decision-making and choices. In the same line, Altrichter and Kepler (2005) advocate the curriculum as "an intelligent proposal" clear as possible, democratic in the sense that its structure and resources encourage and support teachers to critically scrutinise and evaluate, and then further develop it (p. 7). This explanation gives an understanding that the curriculum is a proposal that must be adapted to different contexts where it is applied.

According to Kelly (2009) and Marsh (2009), a curriculum does not assume that what is planned is what is learned. However, it admits that there are unavoidable gaps between policies and practice born out of teachers' preferences, beliefs, contexts and daily practices. Unplanned but actual learning need to be considered as part of curriculum as well. This study accepts that the planned learning content of the curriculum will be unnecessarily received by learners and therefore there is a need to decrease what I term as a *credibility gap* between intention and reality to its minimum. It also believes that all subjects and learning experiences are equally vital for society vision (Marsh, 2009), therefore, this study embraces the broad definition of curriculum by Kelly (2009) and Bernstein's competence curriculum model (cited in Hoadley & Jansen, 2009). Kelly's broad definition assumes the totality and different aspects of the curriculum; and the notion of curriculum as a process by Bertram et al. (2010); realises the realities of human nature such as subjectivity and selectivity which give room for teacher interpretations, contexts and available resources; and Bernstein's competence curriculum model according to Hoadley and Jansen (2009) which puts the learner at the centre of learning as provided by the Namibian national curriculum.

### **3.4.2 Elements of the curriculum**

Chikumbu and Makamure (2000) state that the curriculum consists of four elements or components namely, the purpose (goals and objectives), the content or the subject matter, the methods (strategies), and evaluation (performance or measurement). The four elements of the curriculum are directly or indirectly interconnected, and are influenced by social, economic,

political, environmental and technological factors inherent in their *context*. The *purpose* refers to what is planned to be completed or achieved, established on social ambitions and targets of the society. The purpose of the curriculum is stated as goals and objectives which may be cognitive, psychomotor or affective depending on what is considered significant. The *content* or the subject matter is separated into chunks of knowledge, that is, into different subjects. The content to be studied is guided by predominant theories of knowledge, intentionally selected to address problems facing and affecting the society. It basically outlines the attitudes, values, and skills expected. *Methods* are strategies selected to be applied in the teaching-learning process. *Evaluation* has to do with judgement making of whether the curriculum is achieving what is expected and whether learners are performing according to the standards established. It also involves the identification of curriculum deficits or weaknesses which need reconsideration and improvement.

### **3.4.3 Perspectives of the curriculum**

Curriculum perspectives are the theories of knowledge which inform curriculum decisions. They are very critical in deciding the curriculum because they greatly determine what goes into and what is to be left out of the curriculum. Chikumbu and Makamure (2000) discuss four types of curriculum perspectives: rationalist, empiricist, pragmatist and existentialist, and their relation to learners, teachers, methodology and curriculum. The *rationalists* perceive learners as blank slates who need to receive knowledge, ideas and information from knowledgeable teachers through lecturing and drilling methods. They view knowledge as a sequence of exposures managed by the mind, and therefore their curriculum content is more of symbols and concepts. *Empiricists* also view learners as recipients of knowledge like rationalists; however, teachers need to demonstrate so that learners can attain knowledge from evidence through their senses such as feeling, smelling and seeing. Teaching is teacher-centred based on lectures. The *pragmatists* believe that to acquire knowledge learners need to be personally active. Knowledge is dynamic and is constructed through social interactions such as inquiries, participation and problem solving. The curriculum changes according to situational demands and problems. Teachers are constantly learning and researching. *Existentialists* understand that knowledge is personal and subjective, therefore it is the responsibility of learners to decide what they find relevant and useful to learn in shaping their personal identities. Teachers act as facilitators of learner choices through inquiries and discovery methods. The curriculum is less rigid and diverse to allow for more alternatives.

### **3.4.4 Curriculum change**

To facilitate understanding of the concept curriculum change I find it essential to first consider the question of what ‘change’ is. Change is defined by French and Bell (1995) as “the new state of things different from the old state of things” (p. 3). Change therefore signifies or marks the variance that lies between the old and the new, between the present and the past, and between what is existing and what is anticipated. In the same line of understanding, Meyer and Botha (2000) further explain change as the movement of people from the existing condition or situation to an alternative improved and preferred new state. According to Van Tonder (2004), change is a dynamic and fluid process which is bound to time, generally slow and steady, barely noticeable, and gradually intensifies with time. Although change is mainly designed for the better or improvement of the present condition, it is not always a comfortable event because it comes with the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. This is confirmed by the remark made by Evans (1996) that change “upsets the patterns we are accustomed to and thrusts us into new roles, new relationships, and new perceptions, challenging the way we cope with life” (p. 27). Considering its features, it implies that change does not only target the conditions or states outside human beings, but also their internal states (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007) such as their belief systems, emotions and knowledge. Changed belief systems, feelings and knowledge result in changed ways of acting and behaving, because the way people think, feel and perceive the world is greatly influenced by what they believe in, how they feel and what they know. This consideration is useful for effective implementation because any change which finds it difficult to modify the internal states of the people involved in its implementation process is likely subjected to unsuccessful implementation.

In attempt to understand the concept curriculum change, or what is being changed in a curriculum, Benne and Muntz (1951) state that it is “a change in the system of relationships and roles which constitute the structure of the school and in the process or activities which these roles and relationships support and permit” (p. 3). This definition upholds that change undertakings take place in social systems such as schools, which consist of different but interrelated interactions and relationships among and between their members. For example, interactions and relationships between teachers and school managers, between teachers and learners, and among teachers or learners themselves. It also suggests that curriculum implementers such as teachers, who are involved with change implementation must agree and give their support to curriculum change by shifting from their old ways of

acting, behaving and doing things to new proposed techniques. For change to be effective, implementers need to accept the replacement of their old roles and activities with new possibilities presented, provided they find them necessary and applicable in their contexts. For Keskula, Loogma, Kolka, and Sau-Ek (2012), curriculum change may include amendments to course books, different subject or national curriculum, and national examinations at specific levels. However, it does also comprise the aspect of teaching and learning undertakings such as methods and approaches to teaching and learning.

As earlier noted regarding change itself, Lombard (2012) also remarks that some curriculum changes such as instructional ones bid teachers to surrender their normal accepted methods about teaching practice and as a result demand for the reorganisation of their belief systems which involve the two critical components of human beings, the cognitive and the affective. His study indicated there is a serious need to arrange for teacher learning opportunities where they enhance understanding and insight of the new curriculum inventions and its consequences for their own actions and behaviour. For curriculum change to be successful, consistent and on-going support and training is needed to assist teachers to shape and modify their attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and consequently their practices. As Lowe (2013) asserts, teachers who are not effectively supported are prone to discouragement and frustration, making them revert to their old ways of teaching.

In this study, the term ‘curriculum reform’ refers to the pedagogical changes introduced by the Ministry of Education since independence in 1990. Also, the term will be used similarly with ‘curriculum change’ and ‘curriculum innovation’ because, as O’Sullivan (2002) states, curriculum change involves reform and innovation, as well as the internal and external structures thereof. The external features embody the development, implementation attempts and evaluation of change which has been introduced externally; while internal issues focus on those who are involved in the implementation and how they enact the curriculum changes which originate from the outside. However, this study directs its attention to the internal aspects of actual curriculum implementation, termed as the “black box” (p. 221) which has been reported in literature as being deprived of attention. It explores the views, feelings and experiences of teachers who implement the curriculum changes in order to understand how and why they do what they do in their classrooms.

### **3.5 Curriculum Implementation**

A review of curriculum implementation is necessary to pave the way for understanding its importance in teacher interpretation and practice. Curriculum implementation is defined and explained by curriculum scholars in nearly related ways. According to Aoki et al. (1983), curriculum implementation is “a ritual for attempting to bridge the gap between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use” (p. 4). Chikumbu and Makamure (2000) define it as the way “how planned and officially designed course of study is translated by the teacher into syllabi, schemes of work and lessons to be delivered to students” (p. 50). Altrichter and Kepler (2005) understand that curriculum implementation is “the process through which a proposed concept, model, topic, theory etc. is taken up by some practice” and, as an “adoption of the curriculum plan or product by the realm of practice” (p. 2). For Carl (2012), curriculum implementation is the delivery or application process of core syllabus at subject and/or lesson unit level, as well as at school level at large. All definitions and explanations given above indicate curriculum implementation as an act or practice of interpreting and translating a designed curriculum plan into real experiences of learning. It signifies the effort of enacting what has been planned or suggested and to determine whether it is workable or not; it involves adjustments and modifications depending on the surrounding circumstances. Although curriculum implementation can take place at many educational levels, this study focuses at micro, the classroom level where teachers play a major role as implementing agents.

#### **3.5.1 Perspectives of curriculum implementation**

To understand how teachers are involved and engage in the implementation of the curriculum, Aoki et al. (1983) suggest that two viewpoints which produce two different understandings of curriculum implementation be explored namely: understanding of *implementation as an instrumental action* and understanding of *implementation as a situational praxis*.

##### ***3.5.1.1 Curriculum implementation as an instrumental action***

With reference to Aoki et al. (1983), this perspective sees the implementation process as a one-way and unidirectional movement, in a producer-consumer, and “haves-have-nots” patterns like in business and industry. This means that only some stakeholders who have power and authority are involved in the design and development of the curriculum, while the less powerful and not in possession of authority are left behind in the process. The developers

and subject experts are the “haves” who produce, that is, propose the changes pertained to the program or course for the “have-nots” and non-experts, the teachers and learners to consume or implement it. The implementation techniques in this viewpoint are programmed and are thought to be faithfully followed by implementers at all levels (Cho, 1998). Implementing the curriculum within this framework is challenged by the issue of ineffective communication and lack of ownership, especially with stakeholders who have not been involved in other phases of curriculum development such as resource and material designing and goal setting. This perspective is based on a “know-how-to-do” positivist, scientific and technological ideas which are grounded on proficiency-testing undertaking and supervision by objectives. The competency of the implementing teacher is evaluated according to the required skills and techniques necessary for actual implementing mechanism. The teacher is compared to and seen as an instrument which has no emotions or judgements, being only directed and controlled by regulations and principles, who can be influenced and controlled to give the desired outcomes. Thus, any failure of instructional innovation ends up in teachers being victims of blame (Tabulawa, 1997).

This way of ‘instrumentalism thinking’ is termed by scholars such as Husserl, Habermas, Schroyer and Apple as “the crisis of western reason” (cited in Aoki et al., 1983, p. 6). It is seen as crisis because it brings a conflict between two essential considerations; the one which is loyal to the advancement of technology and the one dedicated to the development of personal and situational life of a human being. Technological way of thinking accepts that problems and conflicts experienced during implementation process can be solved and managed through intentional coherent action grounded on precise measurement and logical management. It abandons and overlooks the wider social context which impacts the trend of instructional change because it disregards the fact that teachers and therefore their classroom management are products of the socio-economic, and historical conditions (Tabulawa, 1997). This view redresses teachers of their humanness and diminishes them to “being-as-things” because it undermines their humane sense-making capability to interpreting the reality in which the curriculum is applied; and therefore, supresses the socio-cultural standards of the contexts concerned (Aoki et al., 1983). It weakens teacher subjectivity and is therefore considered oppressive, dominating and autocratic. In the same line, Fullan as cited in Kelly (2009), regards it as a mindless, mechanistic style which change teachers into teaching machines because it takes away their moral and educational purpose. Even Guba and House, the chief promoters of this technological paradigm in Northern America in the 1970s have

critiqued it for its inclination to “promote a doctrine of transferability and generalizability” and “setting into motion a cycle of failure in educational knowledge production and utilisation productivity” (cited in Aoki et al., 1983, p. 8). This has led to their pronouncement that this view “is not the way the world is” (p. 8), because it undermines and disregards the interpretive actions of teachers as they implement the curriculum.

### ***3.5.1.2 Curriculum implementation as a situational praxis***

Aoki et al. (1983) and Magrini (2015) argue that a situational praxis view of curriculum implementation is established on experiences of human teachers and learners, within their classroom contexts and situations unlike the instrumental action perspective which puts human subjectivity and interpretation aside. The classroom is seen as the authentic world where teachers and learners co-exist and attempt to meet the actual demands of the curriculum to be implemented. The concept **praxis** is devoted to two ways of knowing namely, *theoria* and *praxis* (in its narrow terms). *Theoria* refers to the way of knowing in which the person such as the teacher, come to know through a thoughtful, non-involved observation process directed by the final outcomes (*telos*) of hypothetical evidence. *Praxis* however, is a way of knowing in which the person within an instructional situation reflectively engages the objective world as directed by the *telos* of ordering human action. This perspective supports the idea of an early philosopher Aristotle, who perceives praxis as a ‘holistic activity’ of the whole person accepting that his/her thoughts (head), emotions (heart) and way of life are inseparable.

Theory and practice have been put in dialectical unity; hence the conception ‘dichotomy of theory and practice.’ Earlier philosophers such as the Sophists, have promoted the dichotomised view of theory and practice since they regarded *theoria* as pre-eminent to practice and taught that it is very imperative to know theory first before one applies it into practice. This approach of knowing, referred to as *intellectualism*, places practice in a subordinate position to theory. It believes that knowing starts intellectually from outside experiences and applied in practice later since it sees theory as a guiding and influencing factor of action and practice (Aoki et al., 1983, Magrini, 2015).

However, an alternative perspective to curriculum implementation which is *situational praxis*, puts practice on the same level as theory as it considers the two as “twin moments of the same reality” (Aoki, et al., 1983 p. 13). Instead of viewing theory as a guide into praxis, it sees theory as a thinking or reflective moment in praxis. Practice is an act which is done



thoughtfully, while theory is a thought on what is being done. Therefore, for this perspective, knowing is practical and active because it does not arise from passive inner assumptions but comes from thoughtful involvement with, and experience of, lived reality. This understanding gives the right to teachers and learners in actual classroom situations to admit what they consider good and relevant in their classroom realities as they experience them, to reject or disapprove what is misrepresenting their lived realities, and to participate in actions that promote the transformation of situations as directed by own free interest.

Again, Aoki et al. (1983) states that a situational praxis view of implementation consents to three fundamental assumptions. Firstly, it emphasises and promotes the basic ‘humanisation’ of implementing teachers. Teachers are human beings who are interested in their own welfare as well as that of others; therefore, technicising implementation rips their human subjectivity off, and as Kelly (2009) notes, it makes them teaching machines rather than humans. It allows for interpretations based on personal subjective feelings, experiences and knowledge. Secondly, this perception believes that humans could amend their reality thus, during the implementation process teachers are actors in the construction of their own reality as they interpret and engage within their classroom situations. Lastly, this perspective admits bias and partiality of education. The implementation activity depends on the influence, right, position and ability held by the implementing teacher in his or her social interpersonal context. As a result, curriculum implementation may differ from classroom to classroom, as well as from one school to another, depending on teachers’ personal and social variations.

According to Cho (1998), the *enactment perspective* understands that knowledge is ephemeral and evolving, negotiated socially, culturally and politically according to personal subjective beliefs (Blignaut, 2008); hence the concept curriculum rather than curriculum implementation. Therefore, as ideas actively develop and grow, teachers and learners create and shape their own significant educational experiences. Curriculum is defined in a different way from the perspectives discussed earlier, not essentially just as an ordinary document or an instrument which consists of goals and objectives. However, it is seen as ‘an implementation’, the understanding that contradicts the traditional top-down bureaucratic notion of implementation. The enactment perspective believes that the implementation of the curriculum depends on actual conditions and realities surrounding classrooms and schools, so as the extent of individual and subjective sentiments of teachers and learners, and how they perceive such conditions. The term curriculum enactment allows teachers and learners to bring their existing knowledge, both personal and contextual, to their classrooms and use it to

make sense of educational comprehension and knowledge. It also refers to the use of available and existing curriculum materials as tools by teachers and learners to create their own curriculum in classrooms (Ottevanger, 2001). This enhances the development of teachers' professional skills and autonomy. However, because of its emphasis on teachers' subjective interpretations and situational conditions, in this study, the enactment perspective as an extension of the view which sees implementation as a situational praxis is considered.

### **3.5.2 Approaches or models to curriculum implementation**

Implementation approaches refer to strategies or plans engaged to handle the implementation problem positively and negatively. The problem is negative when the curriculum is not implemented the way it is expected; whereas it is positive when it is trying to find an encouraging process to fine-tune practices for improvement. Literature (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Cho, 1998; Ottevanger, 2001) has distinguished two traditional approaches to curriculum implementation namely: the programmed or fidelity approach and the adaptive-evolutionary approach, with a new evolutionary enactment approach proposed by Snyder, Bolin and Zumwalt (Cho, 1998; Ottevanger, 2001).

Curriculum implementation scholars (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Cho, 1998) stipulate that *programmed or fidelity approach* effects improvement by focusing on the flaws, gaps and deficiencies in the current innovation practices. Given that reality is “static and transmissional” (Cho, 1998, p. 10), the knowledge is that the curriculum and implementation are specified in fixed, established and well-known techniques from the beginning. As a result, implementation by participants means agreement, faithful and loyal application of pre-identified methods without questions. Evaluation of actual practice of innovation implementation is done in line with the developers' intended targets. This approach is considered effective where a gradual, small arranged amount of change is aimed for; where participants involved in implementation approve of objectives and methods specified; and where schools are moderately integrated and their environments constant and stable. The critique with this approach is that it standardises implementation since it does not acknowledge different conditions in which the curriculum is applied; so, as the variety of needs and characteristics of people and schools in different contexts. It is not flexible to provide alternative ways to handle some situational implementation problems. According to Ottevanger (2001), the fidelity perspective is the most expressed in the settings of national curriculum development systems in African countries where teachers are expected to

implement the innovations according to the plans of the developers. This approach is coupled with the perspective which sees curriculum implementation as an instrumental action as earlier described.

On the other hand, scholars such as Stenhouse (cited in Altrichter & Kepler, 2005) and Snyder, Bolin and Zumwalt (cited in Ottevanger, 2001) negate the fidelity approach in support of the *adaptive-evolutionary or mutual adaptation approach*. Mutual adaptation approach is perceived as offering a certain degree of curriculum flexibility that allows teachers and schools to modify the curriculum in accordance with changing needs, interests, beliefs, circumstances and skills pertained to their local situations. According to Cho (1998), reality is evolving as both planners and implementers collectively engage in learning on how to adapt the curriculum to different classroom environments. This perspective suggests that enormous and successful change in practice of an invented innovation is achieved through the application of adaptive, open techniques during implementation. The approach understands that implementation takes place in a multiplicity of school conditions and unstable environments; and that change likely causes conflict to stakeholders due to its complexity. Thus, it advocates an active participation of implementers to adapt innovation characteristics to their situational conditions. Meaningful change of educational practice is not attained by ‘programming’ teacher behaviour, but through successful, tangible communication between teachers and their learners within their actual local contexts. However, despite its advantage of adapting changes to situational characteristics, this approach is criticised for its tendency of having unclear objectives, different implementation methods, and undetermined ever-changing evaluation criteria. These factors make success of implementation difficult to evaluate because common criteria are not available due to diverse local circumstances of teachers and schools. The failure to evaluate implementation success is realised to possibly result in two detrimental consequences of non-implementation and co-optation (Ottevanger, 2001). Non-implementation is when, due to ineffective or lack of communication between innovation developers and implementers, change is not achieved at all; while co-optation happens when new intended innovations are integrated or habituated into usual school practices.

### **3.5.3 Challenges for the learner-centered education implementation**

This discussion provides information and knowledge significant in understanding the complex nature of the implementation process and the underlying difficulties that make it

challenging for teachers to change their classroom practices. The shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education and the implementation of the learner-centred curriculum has been reported to be ineffective in many developing countries including Namibia (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2011). The challenge regarding LCE implementation is referred to as a “paradigm shift.” In her exploration of 72 studies from the *International Journal of Educational Development*, Schweisfurth (2011) investigated issues and problems related to learner-centered education-based programs in specific contexts in developing countries. Her exploration identified that there is an enormous number of problems and challenges related to the nature and implementation of learner-centred education. Problems identified include: obstacles of material and human resources; cultural diversities; and problems related to questions of power and agency. However, these problems are not unique in every situation; they vary from context to context.

According to Horn (2009), the power of the theory lies in its consistent reasoning, so its accuracy or inaccuracy depends on its underlying beliefs and premises. This gives an understanding that a theory premised on impractical philosophies can never be successfully implemented. Coupled with that its complement with the individual and subjective understanding of those involved, the contexts in which it is applied and how such policy changes are communicated to implementers. As our National Curriculum for Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2010) asserts, the conditions in and around schools and those in society at large are very critical preconditions for successful curriculum and policy implementation; indicating that there should be a congruence in the principles of the borrowed policy and that of the society where it is applied. This implies that, to better understand why learner-centered education proves to be difficult in improving the quality of education and learners’ academic performance, there is a need to take a closer investigation into the underlying ideas and premises of this adopted policy and determine whether they are on par with dominant beliefs and trends in our contexts. Dominant ideas, beliefs and trends in societies are cultural, political, economic and social in origin, and therefore greatly influence teacher beliefs, assumptions and ideas about teaching and learning, learners and knowledge. In the following section the factors that are believed to impact on classroom practices are discussed briefly.

### **3.5.4 Factors impacting on curriculum implementation**

Many factors considered to either limit or enhance implementation have been identified in literature (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Carl, 2012; Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000; Cho, 1998; Ottevanger, 2001). As Fullan writes according to several scholars (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Roehrig, Kruse, & Kern, 2007), these factors that affect the implementation of curriculum initiatives are grouped into three key areas: characteristics of the innovation itself, local factors and external factors. Following is a brief outline of these themes.

#### **3.5.4.1 Characteristics of the innovation itself**

The characteristics of the innovation have to do with the nature of the proposed change. Factors linked to change that are believed to impact on its implementation are: the need and relevance, clarity and complexity, and the quality and practicality of change. As Altrichter and Kepler (2005) point out, the perceived *need and necessity* signifies the motive behind explaining why the innovation is necessary. How greater the need is felt by all stakeholders directly involved and whether the anticipated change addresses the need of major concern is very important. The need addressed has to be specific and well-articulated and linked to other needs. The curriculum proposal is expected to be as intelligent (Stenhouse in Altrichter & Kepler, 2005) as possible, thus there is a need for *clarity* in terms of its goals and means. As Pratt argues (cited in Carl, 2012), effective implementation is achieved through clear communication, whereby explanations of terminologies, illustrations of possible evaluations and answers to questions of who, what, when, where, how, and why are supplied to teachers or consumers. Teachers appreciate clear, concrete and tangible clarifications with well-articulated teaching approaches, materials and resources. More significantly is the acknowledgement of situational variations and the degree of flexibility that the proposal allows in providing alternative possibilities.

The degree of innovation *complexity* has also the potential to influence implementation. As Altrichter and Kepler (2005) claim, innovations which require simple and small amount of new skills, slight change of beliefs and not too diverse from the common norms of practice are easier to perform and are likely to succeed because they do not demand much effort from teachers. However, complex changes which are more demanding in respect of new skills, knowledge, and change of beliefs, effort and time are likely to fail unless they are broken into manageable components that are easier to implement step by step. *Quality* is like beauty which lies in the eyes of the beholder because its interpretation differs from individual to

individual according to the opinions and expectations, they have regarding it; as well as their levels of practice. Quality is anticipated in its different forms such as conceptual, formal or communicative, and practical or logistic. Conceptual quality refers to the credibility and consistency of the concepts used; whereas communicative quality has to do with outstanding demonstrations in forms of language, drawings and schematic representations used. Practical quality stems from obtainability and provision of teaching materials and equipment. Quality also refers to contextual *practicality* or suitability which contemplates on circumstances surrounding the contexts where the curriculum proposal is implemented such as funds available, learners and school community language patterns, teacher capabilities and cultural values. The innovation proposal is regarded practical when it addresses the prominent needs, applicable to the conditions of teachers and learners, focused and includes alternative possibilities on how to sort out things in different ways. According to Fullan (quoted in Altrichter & Kepler, 2005), practical “does not necessarily mean ‘easy’ but it does mean the presence of next steps” (p. 8); because the innovation proposal addresses relevant needs.

#### **3.5.4.2 Local characteristics**

Local characteristics are factors that result from judgements made at local levels. According to Roehrig et al. (2007), they include characteristics of regional administrators, principals and teachers. Regional administration includes the attitudes and aspirations of administrators at regional level (directors, inspectors, and resource and advisory teachers) to render not only moral support, but also to establish actions that compel individual teachers and schools to take change seriously. Active support may take methods of continuing visits and follow-ups at schools to coach, demonstrate, and give any relevant professional knowledge and information to struggling teachers.

Schools are the sites for implementation, therefore their characteristics are very critical in the implementation process. School characteristics are divided by Altrichter and Kepler (2005) into two sections: the actors and the school conditions. The actors include the people at school participating in the process of implementation viz. the school management (principals, heads of departments, subject heads and other members of the team); teachers; and learners. While, school conditions consist of school structures, instruments and processes; system of incentives and the career patterns; existing curriculum and assessment procedures; and the school culture. These are discussed briefly starting with actors.

#### 3.5.4.3 *The actors*

The *management team* is the most influential and leading body in school to bring change pertaining to the curriculum. The *principal* is the primary staff member who is responsible for the overall school supervision; and curriculum implementation largely depends on his or her proficiency to execute supervisory duties. This is done by allocating teachers to their areas of teaching expertise and teaching time to specific subjects; ensuring the provision of teaching and learning materials at school; and most importantly, establishing a relaxing and favourable environment for effective teaching and learning (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000; Day 2017; Lambersky, 2016). Critical to that is the initiation of effective monitoring and supporting mechanisms to ensure that working schemes, lesson plans and mark records are well in place, and that teaching, and learning activities are taking place in classrooms. In the view of Altrichter and Kepler (2005), the degree of commitment of the school management team is reflected by the time and energy it dedicates to implementation. The management's commitment takes forms such as insurance of smooth execution of duties at school by guarding the school and its members from external disturbances and disruptions; encouraging teachers by providing support and resources, and initiating incentives and corrective measures for both teachers and learners. However, as Bantwini (2010) states, lack of understanding, classroom support, in-service professional development about new curriculum changes cause a feeling of uncertainty, and thus decrease teacher morale and self-confidence to implement them.

As some scholars (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000; Day, 1999) have asserted, teachers are at the heart of innovation implementation, because they are in a position of selecting and deciding of what to teach from the recommended curriculum. Through their interpretations, they transform and adapt the curriculum as they consciously or unconsciously add or omit what is officially prescribed (Kelly, 2009) because of individual experiences, as well as the surrounding social and structural circumstances in their workplaces (Blignaut, 2011; Spillane et al., 2002). Given the pivotal role they play in the process of transforming curriculum targets into reality, Chikumbu and Makamure (2000) recommend an imperative necessity for teachers to be involved in curriculum planning and design to guarantee their deep understanding as well as to equip them with essential skills required by new innovations for effective implementation. Teacher involvement also provides better opportunities for the new changes to be adjusted to local conditions. Inability or neglect to involve teachers in planning has a negative effect of creating a disagreement

between curriculum strains and teacher acceptance, or an imbalance between “irritation” and “acceptance” relationship (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005, p. 11).

As stated by scholars (Bantwini, 2010; Blignaut, 2011; Spillane et al., 2002; Stoffels, 2008), decision-making is both a personal and situational activity, and for that reason teachers do not necessarily experience and respond to challenges of the new innovations the same way. Teacher selves, individual and collegial factors are very significant in the process of curriculum implementation. Individual factors involve teacher capabilities, competencies, attitudes and beliefs towards change. For Lave and Wenger (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005), the process of implementation is one amongst many factors, that have the potential to transform the professional identity of teachers, with much greater success if it takes place in communities of teachers. In his study to understand forces behind teacher decision-making in the South African classroom contexts, Stoffels (2008) discovered that the competency in both content and pedagogical aspects, and the amount of teaching experience an individual teacher has in a particular subject greatly inspire his or her ability to plan better and more thorough lessons, incorporate and use a variety of teaching and learning resources, and easily link new knowledge to learners’ previous knowledge. Teachers’ broad knowledge regarding the performance and problem experienced by learners in specific topics, and that of the curriculum across the school phase for example, do also influence the selection of content, scope and depth they teach, as well as the kind of classroom activities and exercises they give to learners. Knowledge and skills teachers have accumulated enable them to develop a feeling of competency and confidence to demonstrate sensitivity towards learners’ individual needs and abilities.

Another significant factor stated in literature (Pajares, 1992; Roehrig et al., 2007; Tabulawa, 1997) is teacher’ epistemological beliefs and viewpoints regarding schooling, teaching and learning in general. Unlike knowledge which can be modified and adapted as new experiences are interpreted and assimilated into existing schemata; beliefs are fixed and long-lasting, continue to persist in the thoughts of the teacher despite of conditions (Blignaut, 2007; Pajares, 1992). That is, they are resistant to change. As Blignaut (2007) argues, “all practice is rooted in some theoretical framework, if not explicitly, then implicitly...all methods are based upon epistemology, and epistemology is based on ontology and that educational practice is never value-free” (p. 58). What teachers believe their role is and how they define their responsibilities and duties in terms of what teaching and learning is and how they should be carried out by both teachers and learners, what learners are capable of, how



they regard the content being taught, and what they perceive as good or effective teaching that guides the way they interpret the syllabus and how they choose teaching strategies to be used in classrooms. As the case with Botswana teachers in the study of Tabulawa (1997), the beliefs held by teachers, parents and learners regarding teacher responsibility in schooling, teaching and learning which was grounded on a transmission-reception model, where learners must acquire and assimilate knowledge given and imparted by teachers for vocational reasons were found compatible. As a result, lessons and classroom activities have been designed around teaching strategies such as teacher-centred, little or no learner participation, mass teaching and closed-ended questions to preserve the presumed pedagogical style. This view has influenced the behaviour, actions and attitudes of both teachers and learners in classroom activities because it is only once that teachers embrace the idea of teaching and learning that is in line with the prescribed syllabus, otherwise their practices remain in conflict with the curriculum strategy.

According to Altrichter and Kepler (2005), *learners'* associated abilities, experiences, attitudes, and level of understanding can also impact on implementation. The burden and the extent of demands, whether too much or too less than their potential posed by innovation on learners, possibly influence the degree of their participation to a certain level. This may develop a feeling of hopelessness and discouragement or a sense of complacent and contentment in them.

#### **3.5.4.4 School conditions**

Authors such Altrichter and Kepler (2005), Blignaut (2007), Jenkins (2017 and Whitworth and Chiu (2015) stress the importance of teacher collegial relationships at workplaces. In communities of practice teachers learn different kinds of new behaviours, skills and knowledge through social interactions. The study conducted by Ndemuweda (2011) echoes the same finding from Namibian teachers that collegial assistance promotes meaningful and relevant learning in improving their teaching practice. Collaborative learning is considered effective because it is contextual and situational, enabling teachers to learn what is significant and pertinent to their everyday practice. Different ways of collegial learning involve a series of strategies to name but a few: class visits or observations, mutual assistance by coaching, subject or departmental groups, and informal discussions. The style of leadership and administration in practice and how it fosters and maintains issues of collaboration and collegiality and health relationships among teachers impact on how teachers implement the curriculum policy. Teacher respect as adults, fair and equal treatment not based on

proficiency, energy invested, or excellence of work demonstrated serve as encouraging and motivating factors that lead to teacher autonomy and consequently to teamwork.

School conditions and structure in terms of size, number and quality of classrooms; and the availability of teaching resources and equipment are also assumed to contribute to implementation (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Bantwini, 2010; Roehrig et al., 2007; Stoffels, 2008). According to Day (1999), the size of the classroom has a significant influence on the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Like smaller groups, smaller classes are believed to provide additional effectiveness because they are in outstanding positions to promote participation of learners in academic tasks and hence achievement than in larger classes. In smaller classrooms learners are “more visible and therefore may experience more social pressure from peers and /or the teacher, to actively participate” (Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2007, p. 416). They get confronted with problems more frequently, get extensive attention and assistance of teachers, expend more time on classroom tasks and receive detailed and elaborated feedback on their work from teachers. Small classrooms have emotional impact on the morale and motivation of both teachers and learners, thus it would likely be a potential receptive agent for teachers to new curriculum innovations. However, on the contrary, teachers hardly know and even concentrate on assisting individual learners in larger classes, making the bond between learners and teachers looser unlike in smaller classes (Day, 1999; Downer et al., 2007).

The quality of classroom interactions is also an important factor. It reflects the way teachers implement the curriculum through teaching and involves issues of social and emotional wellbeing of learners. High-quality classrooms are characterised by clear established guidelines for good classroom management, the realisation and response to the needs of learners, warm and conducive atmosphere of learning, high degree of autonomy, and well-prepared resourceful lessons that provide diverse learning opportunities to learners. Teaching in high-quality classrooms is open-ended, aiming to nurture and facilitate high-order thinking, application of knowledge and ideas to new situations and problem solving (Downer et al., 2007). Classroom conditions also involve the extent to which they are resourced and teachers’ potential to utilise teaching and learning materials and equipment, create and invent a variety of learning opportunities; engage and motivate learners to learn; and on learners’ attitude towards specific teachers, readiness and willingness to participate in learning.

Misbehaving learners and disciplinary problems have been highlighted in literature as a disproportionate and intractable part of every teacher’s experience of teaching, elsewhere

(LeeFon, Jacobs, Le Roux & De Wet, 2013) and Namibia in particular where it was referred to as an “elephant in the kraal” by the former president Pohamba (Smith & Amushigamo, 2013 p.650). According to LeeFon et al. (2013), learner unruly behaviour impacts negatively on the process of teaching and learning because, it puts teachers under pressure, frustrates and makes them helpless; making them absent from work and even contemplating of leaving the teaching profession since they are longer enjoying the work. Teachers become victims of disrespect and confrontation by unruly learners talking nonstop in classes and reacting in rude ways when reprimanded. Common problems experienced includes telling lies and using vulgar language, arrogance and disrupting lessons, theft and vandalising of school and teacher properties. The escalation of learner misbehaviour is blamed on the misunderstanding of rights of learners and abolishment of corporal punishment from school after independence (LeeFon et al., 2013; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016). Smith and Amushigamo (2016) assert the belief held by teachers that corporal punishment symbolizes their authority and control hence, its abolishment ripped them of that power, control and authority. They believe that without corporal punishment discipline could not be maintained in classrooms because learners neither show respect nor do their school work unless they are beaten or threatened with a beating. While some teachers are trying their best to reprimand and discipline learners, some do not dare to reprimand them for the sake of the own safety and their properties (LeeFon et al., 2013).

#### ***3.5.4.5 External factors***

School communities or parents and school boards can influence the implementation in either positive or negative ways. Given that change is dictated by political, economic, cultural, social and technological challenges, problems and needs of the country, it is very significant that the implementation addresses these challenges and suggests solutions to them in specific contexts (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000). According to Carl (2012), such challenges can be political opinions, racial conflicts, sexuality and family problems and many others. This encourages community involvement which in turn enhances implementation. Community participation can also be achieved through invitations of knowledgeable or key members such as traditional and spiritual leaders, nurses or any other significant members to share knowledge and information with the school, in other words, to be used as school resources of information (Hamunyela, 2008). Furthermore, implementation carried out in either political, social or economic unstable environmental conditions is

marked to be less effective and successful than stable conditions because contextual fluctuations interrupt implementation of innovations.

As for Carl (2012), the extent to which all consumers/implementers are involved and the amount of information and preparation they received regarding implementation of change is very critical for successful implementation. Therefore, curriculum implementation process demands for utmost teacher involvement which must start right from the beginning of the early phases of curriculum development process. Carl (2012) clarifies factors that determine successful implementation of the curriculum. Foremost, it depends upon the constant interaction with teachers through advice, assistance and encouragement of mutual contacts between themselves and promotion of contacts with learners and parents. This involves the provision of support services by supplying the teaching material, setting of examples, creating a good climate for trust and security and encouragement to teachers (Iita, 2014; Mbangula, 2010). As Bantwini (2010) finds out, teachers get disappointed, confused and have their perceptions of curriculum implementation tarnished when they do not receive classroom support and assistance from regional experts on how to do things the right way. As the case with learners, teachers also need to observe, emulate from or build on good examples of learner-centred teaching, but not only to read the supplied curriculum documents on their own and start to implement accordingly. They need to be sure that what they are doing is what is expected and desired.

Another factor is the compensation to be achieved through monetary, praise, acknowledgement and intrinsic compensation. Intrinsic compensation is realised when teachers are deeply involved right from the beginning to develop the sense of ownership and belonging. This makes teachers see change and implementation of the curriculum as their own making; and therefore, effective implementation thereof is considered as adequate compensation on its own. Other factors essential in contributing to successful implementation of the curriculum include the provision of professional development opportunities, creation of conducive climate for active involvement, active classroom participation, and adoption or acceptance of the curriculum changes to be implemented. Again Bantwini (2010) discovers that the absence of proper orientations to curriculum changes likely develop the feelings of doubt and lack of profound understanding of what is anticipated in teachers. However, only sporadic, once-off consultations with liable subject advisors at regional level are conducted in many developing countries including Namibia (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011). Apart from curriculum launching orientation workshops given, teachers

describe that they barely meet with subject advisors to receive professional assistance from them by discussing critical classroom issues related to the know-how of effective implementation. This problem is mainly ascribed to lack of time owing to overloading in their respective teaching fields and too many tasks consigned to them inside and outside of schools.

### **3.5.5 Implementation of curriculum reforms in Namibia and Sub-Saharan Africa**

A review on how the curriculum changes are implemented in Namibia and sub-Saharan Africa is critical to provide information about difficulties and impediments encountered by teachers in the implementation process. It also reveals the subjective interpretations of teachers regarding the reforms within their different working contexts. Literature has shown that several studies on learner-centeredness and its implementation have been conducted in the Namibian context. These studies have negotiated on a variety of learner-centred issues, to mention but a few: conceptualisation and interpretation of learner-centeredness (Kasanda et al., 2005; National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2004b), practical guidelines regarding its implementation (Mubita, 1998; Thekwane, 2001), how teachers in various subjects implement and the extent to which they implement it (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2002, 2004b; Van Graan, 1998), critical reflection practice (Luwango, 2008; Zeichner et al., 1998), and on how teacher educators interpret and practice it (Nyambe & Wilmot, 2012).

As the case with many contexts in developing sub-Saharan countries, the findings on how LCE is implemented by teachers in Namibia are not much different. The following are the findings of some recent studies conducted in the Namibian contexts. O'Sullivan (2002), has explored the role of teachers in the LCE reform process of English Language teaching within the framework of objective and subjective '*classroom reality*' implementation factors. The study discovered that failure to take into account teachers' real working situations in the development of reforms by policy makers has resulted in teachers not successfully implementing the LCE reforms. It is also borne out of the fact that reforms are too beyond teachers' professional capacity and comprehension that is; the level of education received by teachers is too short to make them understand and be able to do what is demanded of them. Another study was conducted by the same researcher, O'Sullivan (2004b), exploring the implementation of learner-centred approaches by unqualified primary teachers who were undertaking the INSET program. The findings however, still indicate that teachers were not

implementing the LCA as they were trained to do in the INSET program, attached reasons being of low professional capacity of teachers, limited resources, cultural factors and learner background.

In a study conducted in a largely rural and developing Omusati region, Awe (2007), has attempted to determine teachers' knowledge and practices of learner-centred methods of teaching Physical Science. The findings reported that few learner-centred practices, to promote active participation of learners, have been implemented in classrooms. Teachers are described as demonstrating a sound knowledge of different learner-centred methods. However, due to shortage of chairs, teaching and learning materials and science equipment indispensable for learner-centred approach, they are reported using more of teacher-centred lecture methods to retain control over teaching and learning process. The study conducted by Kapenda (2008) has investigated how Mathematics teachers in a largely urban Khomas region implement learner-centred education. The study indicates that teachers are making a remarkable effort in shifting to learner-centred methods because they are using expository methods more often than lecture and discussion strategies. Amidst their best efforts to implement the learner-centered approach in classrooms, challenges such as lack or insufficiency of resources, large classes and lack of discipline among learners are still persistent and make it difficult to do their utmost best.

In the same way Mbangula (2010), has investigated the understanding and implementation of LCE of Oshindonga teachers in Oshana region classrooms. She contends that while teachers are trying to implement learner-centered approach, there is a challenge of misconceptions and inconsistencies, that is, a disagreement between what teachers profess and what they practice. Some teachers are seen to show little understanding and enactment of the learning theory that underpins the learner-centred education. Like other studies discussed earlier, this study also reports challenges and problems hindering the effective implementation of learner-centred education. In order to determine the views of teachers on factors that influence the implementation of guidance and counselling services, Mbongo (2013) evaluated the guidance and counselling services provided in senior secondary schools in Ohangwena region. Reasons such as insufficient training, overloading, and shortage of time, little or no support, and lack of resources and facilities were identified and assumed by teacher councillors as limiting the effective implementation of the program. How teachers perceive and interpret school guidance and counselling is subjected to individual biographical factors such as age, teaching and counselling experience and training received, as well as other personal exposures

observed. Although these findings show slight differences based on personal, discipline or school factors, they are all equivalent and call attention to the bottom-line that learner-centered education is not effectively implemented and practiced in Namibian classrooms as anticipated due to challenges and problems teachers experience in their “*classroom realities*” (O'Sullivan, 2002).

The problem of ineffective implementation is said to be emanating from cultural, social, political and economic backgrounds (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2011; Vavrus et al., 2011) of both teachers and learners. According to Schweisfurth (2011) and Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008), the struggle with the learner-centered education implementation is not only for Namibia, but also for many developing sub-Saharan and African countries. For example, in Botswana (Tabulawa, 1997, 1998); South Africa (Bantwini, 2010; Blignaut, 2007); Tanzania (Saunders & Vulliamy, 1983; Vavrus, 2009); Libya (Saad, 2011); Uganda (Sikoyo, 2010) and many others, it is still experienced where it is associated with a variety of factors like teacher limited capacity, lack of teachers' personal experiences, high learner-teacher ratios, low classroom resources and teacher cultural perspectives of teaching and learning. It has also been reported that many teachers in Namibian schools still use the traditional approach to teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009) because, they were largely and mostly themselves taught through teacher-centred and didactic lecturing ways. Furthermore, the University of Namibia (2012) has affirmed that apart from learner-centred approach, too many new curriculum changes were introduced to teachers in Namibia as from independence in 1990. These unprecedented changes have created a pedagogic shock in many teachers because they were too quick and have never been experienced and implemented in their teaching contexts before. That is, the curriculum is demanding what has not been known and rooted in the history of teachers.

On the other hand, teacher educators, who are supposed to be good role models for teachers in using the learner-centered approach, have also been observed not to practice what they preach. They train and educate student teachers to use learner-centered approach, whilst they are doing it in transmissive teacher-centred ways (Nyambe & Wilmot, 2012; Vavrus et al., 2011). According to Vavrus et al. (2011), many teacher education programs mainly promote the technical rationality models than the reflective practitioner models where teacher educators do not encourage active participation because they mostly design their classes around lectures and imparting of facts to student teachers. Prospective teachers are not

enriched with experience opportunities where they can emulate from, and thus when they go for practice, they largely draw from the way they were taught, which was teacher-centred.

In addition to the studies conducted, the Ministry of Education (2007) in its educational strategic plan, ETSIP, has admitted that the quality of education and that of its products in Namibia after 15 years of learner-centered education implementation has not yet been translated into pleasing outcome; due to teachers' inability to interpret the learner-centred teaching theory into actual practice in classrooms. This has been testified by the reports of the National External School Evaluation (NESE) (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009) that learner-centred approach is not well implemented; classrooms are rather dominated by traditional, didactic and inefficient teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning. Other activities observed not in line with learner-centeredness include passivity of learners in classroom interactions, negligence of learners' learning styles by teachers, and little or no attention paid to independent and assessment for learning.

Based on this ground therefore, this study attempts to understand factors that influence teacher decisions to implement the curriculum changes the way they do. Many studies conducted have observed classroom instructions to investigate how teachers translate policy into practice. However, few studies investigate factors that impact their instructional decisions and make them do what they do in their classrooms. As Saad (2011) remarks, understanding why teachers deviate from curriculum principles is critical in providing information about teacher concerns and obstacles they face during implementation. It also discloses teachers' subjective views regarding changes and different contexts in which they work, and subsequently illuminate prospective stumbling blocks to the implementation of new curriculum inventions and changes.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter the literature reviewed gives a theoretical including the empirical findings on the factors that impact on teachers' experiences and sense-making to implement the curriculum changes. The overview from the curriculum and curriculum implementation indicates that how the curriculum is perceived and designed influences the implementation perspective thereof and consequently its expectations from teachers. It also poses the problem of the need to consider teachers' viewpoints as informed by their life experiences, emotions and practical contexts; and arrange for continuous professional learning opportunities to orientate them to new curriculum changes. Overview from teacher working lives indicates



that the teachers' work is influenced by a variety of aspects, from the personal, school and broader community backgrounds. Based on this understanding, this study acknowledges that teachers are humans with historical backgrounds and emotions, who live, work and interact with others in different contexts such as home and school. Therefore, to understand their behaviour and actions better, there is a need to first understand who they are, what they have encountered in life, and how they make their judgements.

## CHAPTER 4

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the literature reviewed for this study. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework that underpins the research study. It draws on the sense-making theory by Spillane et al. (2002) to make sense of the narratives and semi-structure interviews of teachers. The fact that the objective seeks to understand how teachers interpret the curriculum policy changes and its leaning to the teaching contexts enabled the researcher locate it within the integrated sense-making framework. This framework suggests that the interpretation incorporates both the individual and the contextual aspects. As Spillane and his colleagues argue, failure to implement policy by the teachers as intended is not intentional or willful however, teachers are withheld and limited by their prior knowledge, beliefs, norms and values as well as by different factors in the contexts surrounding them. Teacher interpretation and decision-making are influenced by personal and contextual factors.

To begin with, the chapter starts with the brief history of education policy implementation followed by the perspectives used in policy implementation research over the recent decades. This is followed by the definition of the concept sense-making and the brief explanation of how sense-making and curriculum implementation are related. Next is the brief historical background of the sense-making theory and the emergence of the integrated cognitive sense-making framework which is specifically employed in this study. Lastly, the main three dimensions of Spillane's integrated cognitive sense-making framework and their respective elements are then outlined.

#### 4.2 Brief History of Education Policy Implementation

The research on policy implementation emerged in the 1960s as a formal field of inquiry and which went through three stages, referred to as waves. Each wave is identified by specific changes in policy demands, and by basic approaches used to research implementation (Honig, 2006).

The *first wave* focused on what had to be implemented. The focus of earlier studies conducted during the Great Society Period explored on the new education policies passed in

the 1960 in the US which aimed to reach broad societal aims in which the assessment of implementers was “far more of modest measures (p. 5). Policy designs were of distributive, categorical and regulatory qualities, and were meant to allocate funds to qualified groups or categories of students and to guarantee that the resources were used as intended by policy-makers. The design was also top-down since it was established on the notion that policymakers at the top should invent policies for implementers to carry out and monitor the implementers’ compliance. According to Honig (2006), many studies assessed how policy was being implemented on a large-scale and came up with undisputed findings of implementation failures. Incompetence to consistently enact policy programs as anticipated by schools and districts was ascribed to the fundamental conflicts between policy-makers and implementers’ interests, as well as general lack of ability and determination to carry out orders by implementers. They used the dominant view, prevalent at the time that regarded an individual implementer as the utmost significant unit of analysis and postulated that individuals were motivated by individual self-interests that make them act in constantly discordant ways with policy-makers’ intentions. Suggested strategies indicated to effectively reduce the breach between the two, that is, policy, design and implementation included team-building among implementers, easy to understand guidelines for implementation, and powerful incentives to attract implementers.

The *second wave* of implementation research, again according to Honig (2006), gave attention to what has been implemented over time. Major policy designs revealed some continuity, while some revealed a certain degree of change. Some explored policies entailed more precise regulations and others guidance; whereas some extended to take account of distributive, categorical and regulatory features. Research questions were still investigating conformity or fidelity of implementation, although few researchers considered the differences in implementation by predicting the significance and influence that mediators such as policies, people and places could make on the process of implementation. Some researchers underscored the differences of policy designs that lied in their delivery information as well as in basic mechanisms for allocating resources. At several stages disagreements were perceived in the implementation process of re-distributive programs than developmental programs.

Other studies however, explained implementers differently. Instead of perceiving them as incapable and unmotivated professionals they rather saw them as involved performers who were trying to manage with a multitude of completely new policy requests communicated at the “street level” and reconcile workplace difficulties with their personal and professional

standpoints. The significance of attending to local contexts developed, considering the understanding that both macro- and micro-level factors have the capacity to shape implementation; and that implementation improves through the process of mutual adaptation. Mutual adaptation occurs as implementers reconcile their micro-level contexts with macro-level demands (Berman & McLaughlin, cited in Honig, 2006). Differences among policy, people and places were areas of importance that impact on implementation, but little was given on how they counted. For example, the explanations did not provide how the dimensions of contexts were critical, under what situations they were significant, or how policy makers should attend to them. Knowledge building was still replicating the existing anxieties that searched for gap closure between policy makers and implementers. Substitution policy models and instruments such as backward mapping and decision checklists were designed to assist policy-makers scheme implementers' non-conformities with procedures of policy-makers and agree to avoid implementation drawbacks at the point of policy design (Honig, 2006).

The *third wave* of implementation research showed a growing concern with what actually worked. The shift of policy designs in the 1980s emphasized on achieving observable increases in student academic achievement than guaranteeing the full implementation of policy. This was to be achieved through new considerations of curriculum and teaching, and teacher professionalism. The current third wave deals with central issues and core elements of schooling namely: who should teach, what shall be taught, and the manner it is taught (Honig, 2006). The development of policy is partly categorical, but also focuses on the curriculum. Main efforts to develop curriculum framework and grade-level initiatives to direct school choices and teacher professional development were made and developments that aim to reform schools and their management were acknowledged and encouraged (Knapp et al., 1991; Marsh & Crocker, 1991; Odden & Marsh, 1988; Malen et al., 1990; David, 1989; cited in Honig, 2006). Many studies in this current wave echoed discoveries from previous waves that inconsistencies between policy makers and implementers' reasons hampered implementation (Anderson et al., 1987 cited in Honig, 2006). A more nuanced understanding of the significance of policies, people and places also began to take shape, with more highlight that policy instruments and tools such as mandates, incentives, capacity building and systems change reflected different underlying assumptions about how to motivate implementers to change. They argue that an analysis of policy designs at this level would help reveal why policies of certain types were effective.

A wide range of people emerged in implementation studies as consequential to implementation. Various researchers began to illuminate the importance of state educational agency leaders and staff as designers and implementers of policy. Research explicitly explored how school-based professionals shaped implementation process and outcomes (Rosenholtz, 1985). The studies revealed that policy implementation is a negotiated process involving at least the government, states, local districts through which terms of policy compliance were constructed. They also solidify a focus on implementers' agency as an important avenue for implementation research. Settings in several respects that mattered to implementation but received little attention in prior waves of reform and research, were elaborated including geographic locations and jurisdictions. Locations and jurisdictions varied in terms of their politics, culture and histories in ways that helped to explain their differing responses to policy directives (Fuhrman et al., 1988, p.64). Locations also included new units of analysis such as teacher networks and communities and studies in this vein revealed these non-legislated associations among implementers as powerful influences on implementers' work (Anderson et al., 1987; Fuhrman et al., 1988; Lieberman & McLaughlin 1992; Little, 1984; Marsh & Crocker, 1991). Some implementation researchers went as far as to make settings rather than policies their main concern by using a hallmark approach for the movement of effective schools; the one which tracked backwards from practice to policy (vs policy to practice). They focused on high performing schools with the purpose of finding out what the policy was and other conditions in those schools that determine their performance. Some researchers such as McLaughlin (1991b) remarked the need to move away from the understanding of which policies got implemented towards the elaboration of various conditions that matter to enabling effective practice.

### **4.3 Recent Perspectives of Policy Implementation Research**

According to numerous policy implementation scholars such as Lombard (2012), Quinn (2009) and Spillane et al. (2002), many explanations on how policy should be implemented were chiefly based on two perspectives namely, the top-down or institutional perspective and the bottom-up or rational choice perspective. The **institutional or top-down** perspective posits that experts and knowledgeable policy-makers at the top levels of the education systems develop policies and decisions and hand them down to agents at lower levels like schools for implementation, as well as monitor their obedience (Honig, 2006). According to Coburn (2001), the institutional perspective is concerned with the link between policy

messages and instructional practice, concentrating on how schools and implementers react to specific or to several related policy initiatives. Schools and teachers are challenged with various pressures from different sources concerning how they must teach, belief systems about teaching and learning which do not conform to theirs, and specific prescribed teaching practices. The institutional viewpoint serves as a powerful instrument to understand the complex relationship that exists between schools and their multidimensional environments. It is cultural in nature because it assumes that patterns of action and beliefs within respective schools are moulded by the factors from the environment. It thus stresses the importance of the contexts where policy is implemented. Influence of policy action and beliefs by the environment factors takes place through regulative means as they integrated in the formal policy through normative means; since in quest for acceptability, teachers are obliged to use particular strategies, or through cognitive means as beliefs and practices are taken for granted as common-sense way of doing things (Coburn, 2001; Quinn, 2009). However, the institutional perception has been realised that it does not provide a tool that allows for direct empirical investigation of the connections between the environment and the actual classroom practice by the teachers. It neglects the fact that teachers are social beings who actively negotiate norms, beliefs, and practices from the environments; build and rebuild them in their contexts as they translate them into practice (Blignaut, 2011; Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002).

The **bottom-up or rational choice theory** gives its attention to actors who must translate policy into practice. The rational choice perspective assumes that “agents’ decisions are guided by rational choice ideas in which utility maximisation is the guiding principle for human behaviour” (Spillane et al., 2002, pp. 389-390). Although it is associated with an earlier perspective in the sense that they all provide instruments to observe the process of policy implementation, the rational choice sees policy as a practical enterprise intended to attain significant objectives (Quinn, 2009; Spillane et al., 2002). It does not consider the social context in which the policy is implemented. Implementing agents, principals and teachers, are driven by their own self-gain. Therefore, it proposes that to safeguard effective implementation, appropriate forms of encouragement in the form of remuneration or promotions and proper monitoring structures should be put in place. For rational choice theorists, policy implementation failure occurs due to school managers’ incapability to construct clear policy intentions and directives; lack of proper supervision and monitoring,

and ignorance or neglect from the side of local implementers; responsibilities not clearly determined because of poor administration and school arrangements (Spillane et al., 2002).

According to Quinn (2009) and Spillane et al. (2002), one of the main shortcomings of the rational perspective is the taken-for-granted assumption that implementing agents such as school managers and teachers do always understand what the policy-makers demand them to do. That is, they know what is expected of them by the policy. As such, they expect change agents to respond and act accordingly as intended, and failure to do so implies that they either deliberately ignore or modify the policy for own personal interests. From the cognitive outlook, this view disrespects and undermines the complexity involved in the sense-making process, because in many cases, policy messages are confusing and pose diverse and often contradicting information.

#### **4.4 The Concept Sense-Making**

Klein, Moon, and Hoffman (2006) define sense-making as the process of “how people make sense out of their experiences in the world” (p. 70) involving concepts such as creativity, curiosity, comprehension, mental modelling and verdict. Creativity refers to how people find unique answers to solve personal problems and dilemmas. Curiosity has to do with aspects which direct motivation of specific observable behaviour in each environment. Comprehension denotes an understanding of more complicated things or events. Mental modelling refers to a process of constructing a mental picture or an associated representation that can be expressed in terms of concepts, principles and knowledge. As a verdict, sense-making is a motivated, on-going effort to understand relationships to act efficiently. This underlines that the sense-making process is unique and multi-dimensional, which is influenced by the personal and contextual situations of individuals.

Lombard (2012), suggests that the process of sense-making stems from cognition, the branch of science which deals with the study of how the human brain represents and transforms information. This branch of science has its long history that can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophical transcripts of McCulloch and Pitts in the 1930s and 1940s through their quest to understand the principle of human brain organisation. Cognitive research studies increased in the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on how people go through the process of decision-making and problem-solving to better understand human thought. Since cognition is purely rational and only involves the functioning of the human thought, theorists such as

Spillane and colleagues made adaptations and modifications to include a variety of dimensions that will help to understand human reasoning and behaviour better.

#### **4.5 Sense-Making and Curriculum Policy Implementation**

Quinn (2009) describes policy implementation as an act of bringing policy knowledge, skills and abilities to the enactment; while Carl (2012) defines curriculum policy implementation as the delivery or application process of core syllabus at subject and/or lesson unit level, as well as at school level. The sense-making model is important in the implementation of curriculum policy because it includes both perspectives of implementation standards, namely, the bottom-up and top-down (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 420). The key elements of Spillane et al.'s sense-making model are the individual, contextual, and policy representation aspects. The influence of policy messages and the way policy documents communicate the messages indicate the importance of the top-down perspective in the model. Whereas, the basic elements in the sense-making process which are implementing agents' scripts or schemata, in combination with their various contexts or situations, represent the bottom-perspective. Spillane et al.'s integrated cognitive sense-making model is open to diverse expansions of inclusive explanations for why policy succeeds or fails at the "street level"; thus, it was found useful as an analytical tool to explore the implementation process. It is a non-linear model, meaning that it does not propose which component of the sense-making process, adoption or adaptation of the policy, occurs first in the decision-making of the implementing agents when attempting policy into local practice. Conventional account theories of policy implementation fail to acknowledge the complexity of human sense-making by assuming that teachers willingly ignore or modify the intention of policy-makers. On the contrary, sense-making aims to consider the process by which implementing agents come to know the policy and analyse the explanations they attach to it and how those explanations influence the process of implementation. According to Lombard (2012), exploring the mechanisms by which implementers understand and linking it to their practice will help explain the influences on implementation from the core agents of implementation. The latter provides numerous opportunities which include the change of policy-makers' notions about changing local practice.



## **4.6 Brief History of a Cognitive Sense-Making Framework**

Many research studies on how teachers make sense of policy in past decades have mainly explored the effect that given changes make on schools and teachers. This focus has been later changed by some researchers to observe how teachers rather shape the policy, because it has been noticed that as teachers implement the policy, they interpret, adapt and modify it according to their contexts (Coburn, 2001). However, little on organised research practices on how teachers interpret and adapt the policy was known, except the known element that they could do it in their professional communities of practice where the sharing of information could take place. Earlier research studies (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Jennings, 1996; Spillane & Jennings, 1997; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977 as cited in Blignaut, 2011; Coburn, 2001) that have explored the process of teachers' policy sense-making have solely focused on individual interpretation. The reasoning behind ineffective policy implementation has been ascribed to technicist factors such as inadequate skills and knowledge by teachers to carry out the innovation practice; use of policy messages for personal interests and gains; as well as a lack of will and intention to sabotage the initiative by implementing agents (Blignaut, 2011).

Several studies worldwide have used the cognitive analysis to explore how the policy is interpreted by the implementing agents. These studies have therefore, used the inclusive cognitive view, but not the one modified by Spillane et al. (2002). Coburn (2001), in California, explored how elementary school teachers make a collective sense of state reading policies in their professional communities. The data from the study reveal that the nature and structure of formal networks and informal associations among teachers shape the process. In their longitudinal case study of five schools in the two states, California and Florida, Schmidt and Datnow (2005) examined the role of teacher emotions in the process of sense-making in comprehensive school reforms (CSR). They found that teachers attach more emotions to their sense-making at classroom levels because, unlike schools, classrooms are their basic contexts for meaning-making.

In Namibia, Boer (2012) makes use of the cognitive lens to explore how the Namibian high school teachers experienced the information and communication technology (ICT) policy in their schools. Although she has referred and drawn some elements from Spillane et al. (2002), she has not used the integrated cognitive framework per se. The study has combined the quantitative and qualitative designs supplemented by classroom observations. The findings indicate that the way teachers implement the policy reveals that their understanding of the policy goals still need to be developed and improved. In addition, the initial design and

actual application of the policy support the notion of disregarding the real actualities in which teachers work; lack of school motivation and willingness; and inadequate support to teachers. The origin of an inclusive analysis has turned the research focus in a different direction (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 1999) by looking beyond individual interpretation and thus paved the new way to understand that teachers also make meaning of policy codes through discussions deeply rooted in and influenced by social, professional and cultural context factors (Blignaut, 2011). The cognitive sense-making perspective has been widely used in the field of education to explore how implementing agents construct an understanding of education policy (Boer, 2012; Honig, 2006; Mantere, 2000; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Spillane, 2000).

The inclusive review succeeded in detecting the variables or factors that impact on policy implementation; however, it is found limited due to its inability to include other aspects from the social and policy contexts. It is against this background that Spillane and his colleagues designed the *integrated cognitive sense-making framework* which sketches the cognitive elements of the implementation process by classifying the concerned concepts and the relationships amongst them. The framework is both theoretical and empirical-based, grounded on the argument: “what policy means for implementing agents is constituted in the interaction of their existing cognitive structures, their situation and the policy signals” (p. 388); and it aims to describe teachers’ sense-making action during the policy implementation process. Studies that specifically used Spillane et al.’s (2002) improved integrated cognitive sense-making model included Quinn (2009) which is international; Blignaut (2007; 2008; 2011) and Lombard (2012) which are all conducted in South African contexts.

Quinn (2009), in Maryland (USA), examines the sense-making of middle school science teachers who received training and sought to implement the reading apprenticeship program in their teaching practice. His findings revealed that policy implementation varies for different members of the team. While the implementation was negatively affected by the conflict with other policies and resistance by learners, it was also enhanced by participation of teachers in communities of practice. In South Africa, Lombard (2012) explores the experiences and responses of Arts and Culture teachers about the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The findings show that teachers find it hard to adjust to the more demanding methodologies, since they are time consuming and call for very different roles in classrooms. Teachers have rather adapted the curriculum than adopting it, implying that instead of implementing it as it is, teachers rather have it modified according to

their circumstances. Blignaut (2011) examines how an individual teacher in the South African context interprets the new policy and how his understanding is manifested in classroom practice. The findings indicate that individual existing beliefs and knowledge of what the teacher believes to be good teaching guide him or her to reshape and adapt the policy to his or her own teaching situation; the process is seen as diluting and abating the policy messages at classroom level.

Although this cognitive sense-making theory by Spillane et al. (2002) has been found to be a useful theory in understanding how implementing agents interpret or make sense of policy for implementation, it also has its critiques. Blignaut (2008) highlights that the framework originates from the western systems of education that are democratically and traditionally homogenous, assuming there are no inequalities in terms of school resourcefulness and teacher supply. The theory takes for granted that all schools are equally and richly supplied with infrastructure and facilities, as well as teaching and learning resources. It assumes that all teachers have received the same basic and higher quality education and are highly professionally qualified. The sense-making theory fails to take into consideration the background messes or inconsistencies that have existed in different education systems in some colonised African countries, such as the discriminations and anomalies experienced in the apartheid education system that was predominant in South Africa and Namibia, whereby citizens did not have equal opportunities to quality education. It does not consider the contexts where teacher education and training have been only limited to certain levels and where the learner-teacher ratios are very high due to shortage of qualified teachers.

Identically, the theory does not consider that the contexts of Namibian schools are basically determined by the previous position of the schools in the Apartheid era because it takes for granted that teachers are plentifully supplied in terms of professional development and teaching resources. Schools for the previously advantaged citizens have retained their facilities and resources from the past and are still well-off unlike those of the formerly disadvantaged. This has maintained and broadened the inequalities between the school conditions and situations.

This study acknowledges that personal and school contextual differences could be caused by numerous background variants stemmed from the apartheid education system. Although the system has been eliminated two decades back, its effects and influences can still predominate the current education system because, experiences from the apartheid education system are

still used as reliable personal and contextual factors in the sense-making process as teachers endeavour to implement new education reforms. It is in this light that this study has selected its participants who came from unvarying cultural and educational backgrounds, and from rural or developing schools to avoid too diverse ideas. This is because teachers have different and complex explanations inherent in their academic, historical, social or political backgrounds which guide the way they respond to new changes the way they do (Blignaut, 2007, p.50).

The integrated cognitive sense-making framework developed by Spillane et al. (2002) was found useful in answering research questions on the implementation of curriculum reform in Namibia. The study intended to establish if there is a mismatch between policy messages and how they are practised by the teachers. The internal tension observed as they interpret the reforms detects that there is a problem that negatively influences the way reforms are implemented. From cognitive perspective, countless numbers of different practical opportunities embedded within the abstract philosophies of a policy depend on what is inside teachers. One of the critical elements for effective policy implementation is whether and how teachers, the implementing agents, come to understand their practice. This is significant because the extent of professional development opportunities and support provided to teachers regarding policy updating and the manner it is communicated have the potential to convince teachers that there is a need to shift their existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards new ways of doing things. Policy cognition involves valued aspects such as intellectual representations, views, judgments and reasoning. They are valuable because they are critical in investigating and understanding how the education policies are implemented.

Like many education initiatives, learner-centred education policy demands more of intellectual understanding of both content and pedagogy because it poses a challenge to teachers' ground beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning. Teachers interpret and understand new policy innovations about local behaviour within the boundaries of their existing knowledge and beliefs, with much influence from social and structural conditions of immediate worlds such as working places. The framework is cognitive because it involves reasoning, the processing of basic information with its complexity and influence about abstract ideas; influence of motivation and affect; and the ways social context and social interaction affect this sense-making. According to Blignaut (2007, p. 53), "humans are today because of who they were yesterday" meaning that teachers' basic individual reasoning is not independent, but it is linked to their life histories rooted in their personal, cultural and social

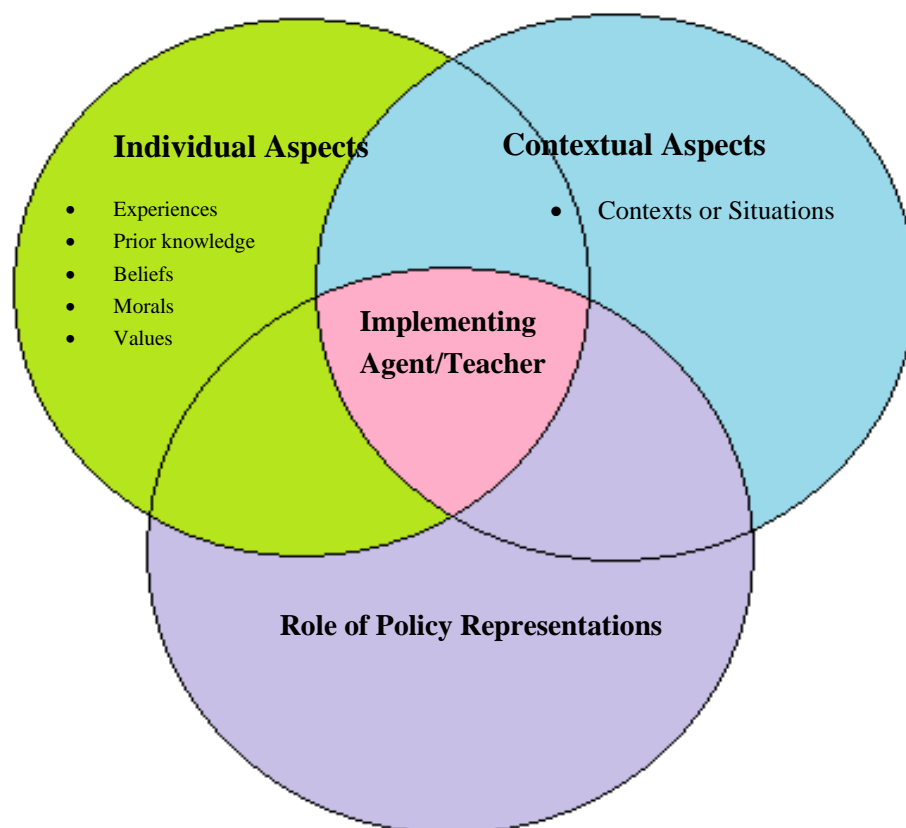
contexts. The researcher believes that this framework helps to understand teacher responses to learner-centered education policy in Namibia because, as Blignaut (2011) asserts, responses of teachers which manifest in their classroom practices is a result of their cognitive interpretation. The researcher hopes the theory exposes the differences hidden in personal and contextual dimensions of sense-making and help to understand the impact that inequalities in education can make. This is because it allows for the exposure of teachers' understanding of policy by probing questions into their existing beliefs, knowledge and experiences about teaching and learning, learners, and working conditions. Teacher responses will indicate whether their beliefs are on par or in conflict with policy; and will also help determine if teachers reshape or adapt the curriculum policy according to their beliefs and situations or not. The contextual element embedded in this framework enables this study to investigate the school or community contexts in which the teachers work. This framework challenges the technicist approach to reform implementation which solely attributes technical factors and overlooks other aspects. Nevertheless, it recognizes other aspects from individual and situational contexts of the reform implementers and acknowledges interpretation that precedes implementation, is influenced by tensions and emotions generated by personal and contextual factors.

#### **4.7 The Integrated Cognitive Sense-Making Framework**

According to Spillane et al. (2002), the integrated cognitive sense-making framework has three integrated dimensions: the individual cognition, the situated cognition, and the role of representations. Each dimension has concept elements which are, at some point intertwined and prove difficult to separate from each other; hence, it is integrated. The individual cognition explores the implementing agents as individual sense-makers by looking into how they notice and interpret stimuli; and how prior knowledge, beliefs and experiences influence the way they create new understandings. The situated cognition foregrounds the importance of the context in understanding the implementing agent's sense-making. It argues that the multiple dimensions of the context shape the sense-making of an implementer regarding the policy. It takes a closer look into how various aspects of contexts act as potential elements of the sense-making process. The role of representations focuses on the influence of policy design and representation in the implementing agents' sense-making. It looks on the role of external policy communication in assisting teachers to understand the fundamental goals of policymakers.

The figure below illustrates a diagrammatical representation of the three main integrated elements of the cognitive sense-making framework namely: the individual, the social and the role of policy representations. How teachers understand and interpret the policy is largely influenced by the knowledge, personal beliefs and cultural values and morals, and experiences they have stored in their memories over the period of years; the contexts or situations they live; as well as by the nature of policy messages to be implemented.

**Figure 4.1: Dimensions of the Integrated Cognitive Sense-making Model (Adapted from Spillane et al., 2002)**



The following sections briefly state and discuss the key dimensions and their sub-elements of the *integrated cognitive sense-making model*.

#### **4.7.1 Implementing agent as an individual sense-maker**

This element of the framework includes the personal aspects of the implementer that influence the interpretation and implementation of the policy. This dimension posits that “what the policy comes to mean for an implementing agent depends, to a great extent, on their repertoire of existing knowledge and experiences” (Spillane et al., p. 393). The

following section highlights individual cognitive elements which affect teaching and learning and the observed discoveries on how they impact on policy implementation.

#### ***4.7.1.1 Prior knowledge and sense-making***

The existing beliefs and practices of teachers have the capacity to either facilitate or impede implementation. Unlike the conventional rational perspective which views teacher failure to implement policy as a willful and intentional effort to sabotage policy intention, the sense-making framework understands that teachers may fail to act or behave in ways as anticipated by policy makers just because their knowledge, is limited or contradicting with policy demands. Prior beliefs and dispositions and knowledge that teachers hold regarding policy demand are very important. How teachers interpret and understand the policy messages, and how they consequently implement the policy is greatly shaped by what they know and believe to be good teaching and learning through experience. The emphasis on the role of human sense-making in policy implementation underlines the importance of unintended failures of implementation; however, it allows willful misinterpretation. The paramount idea here is that implementation depends on *what* teachers understand themselves responding to, and not necessarily that they choose to respond to the policy. The “what” of policy refers to the content and ideas that require the change of the existing behaviour lying in the policy scripts such as directions, goals and regulations. Cohen (cited in Spillane et al., 2002, p. 394) asserts that “when research is used in policymaking, it is mediated through users’ earlier knowledge” complemented but not replaced by the prior knowledge and practice of teachers and other agents.

#### ***4.7.1.2 Different interpretations of the same message***

Spillane et al. (2002), accept the qualitative assumption that acknowledges the uniqueness of teachers in the way they make interpretations of events and messages. Same policy message directed to different teachers can be received and interpreted as an “inquiry” in various ways. How individual teachers look at the message is determined by their ideas about changing instructional practice rooted in their personal, cultural, historical and contextual background factors. Some differences in interpretation are caused by learning opportunities that different teachers receive, professional development workshops regarding policy understanding, direction and support at schools, circuit or regional levels. On the other hand, even teachers who receive similar training, guidance and support, and attend similar development workshops and exposed to similar professional experiences are said to construct different

understandings of the policy. This is because of their differing beliefs which influence the way they perceive teaching, learning, subject matter and learners. This underlines the notion that the significance of varying interpretations is based on the influence that prior knowledge has in policy implementation. The interpretation of policy messages and implementation is greatly influenced by individual factors of teachers such as identity. Interpretation of policy provision is a cognitive process where cognition leads to action; thus, it is very important for implementing agents to first understand what it really means and what it is asking them to do before they act on it. It is therefore not amazing that in his study, Higgs (cited in Spillane et al., 2002) finds out that there is a 'great variability' in understanding of local educators resulting from how they interpret the state reform individually. The differences in interpretation by individual implementers can be used to predict the level of implementation at local and classroom levels; which implies that the bigger the difference, the greater the variability. This indicates how individual cognition is critical in implementation.

#### ***4.7.1.3 Agents can misunderstand new ideas as familiar, hindering change***

Another opinion underlined by Spillane et al. (2002) is that human beings, including implementing agents, have the tendency to understand and comprehend notions and thoughts as familiar than they are. This is powerfully influenced and guided by the expectations that implementation agents have regarding change. To understand change, they interpret policy ideas in line with their existing practices, beliefs and knowledge. However, in many circumstances if new ideas and practices do not correspond with what is already known rejection is likely to happen. It is likely that disagreements in terms of understanding and interpreting may arise due to some unforeseen circumstances or conditions that can go unnoticed during the process. In some circumstances, certain features can be noticed and remembered as hindrances that interrupt expectations and become the emphasis of consideration. Change on basic reasoning about teaching has been regarded a challenging and unusual undertaking, if it prompts the rearrangement of individuals' central prior beliefs. Once more, for some people, new information is reasonably fixed and adjusted in the old representation to appropriate what is already known or encoded without its consequences. What is already known is fully considered.

The mental handling of knowledge involves the protection and maintenance of prevailing structures instead of thorough transformation thereof. There is a tendency to relate new ideas to older ones previously held, without inadequate consideration to differing features from the



familiar; or integrated without the rearrangement of the existing knowledge and beliefs. This results in hit-or-miss and uneven practice changes in the present implementation of the idea. Policy implementers tend to pay more attention to popular and familiar policy ideas in the previous practice than to new and modern ideas. They lack to rationally link and explain unfamiliar ideas and as a result devote less attention to and overlook them. This inclination of human nature to observe new ideas as familiar is an impediment to effective change. The understanding of teachers regarding teaching and learning is thus a combination of old and new ideas, because new ideas are assimilated into the existing mental structures. The incorporation of new ideas into existing beliefs and understanding can be too demanding and challenging for teachers, especially when the new ideas which represent the intent of policy disagree with their implicit representations. This makes true change to be a difficult accomplishment.

#### ***4.7.1.4 Understanding may focus on superficial features, missing deeper relationships***

Individual expertise and deep knowledge are very important as they influence the way implementing agents make sense of the conditions and ideas, since they help them to access and use superficial characteristics and deeper philosophies regarding change. Teachers with wider and deeper expertise or knowledge about the principle are likely to understand and depict differences between closely similar, yet different ideas of the principle and act accordingly unlike others. Teachers who are unable to look beneath the surface tend to equate and compare their classroom practices with policy objectives by simply looking at the presence of certain surface fundamental features and conclude their practice to be in line with what is intended by policymakers. However, their classroom implementation mainly fails to reflect deeper and more abstract principles, since they construct their understanding based on deluded superficial relationships and comparisons, and analogical reasoning rather than on deeper meanings. This makes many implementing agents' neophytes when it comes to the implementation of policy ideas that push for multifaceted and unusual changes in existing behaviour. Recent studies by Spillane (2000) and Spillane and Callahan (Spillane et al., 2002) revealed predominant patterns in the understandings of implementing agents that when encountering new policy ideas about their work they have the tendency to refer to and make shallow links to their previous experiences, making use of incomplete or unrealistic information rather than using deeper underlying structural ideas. Making connections between reform ideas and prior experiences based exclusively on superficial analogies due to inability to understand deeper structural thoughts results in misinterpretation of the whole

reform purpose and subsequently into superficial implementation of the policy. Tendency to heavily rely on superficial features of policy is seen to be consistent with some studies of implementation failures by Cohen (Spillane et al., 2002) which report that teachers who are seen teaching in line with the reform ideas do so simply because they apply the more outstanding features of the reform however, at the same time they integrate reform ideas into their very traditional practice. In the same vein, Haug (Spillane et al., 2002) states that “partial understandings” are a result of reliance on superficial similarities in which teachers conclude the reform to mean actual changes while in the real sense they do not make a distinction of the need to change vital aspects of students’ interactions in relation to the subject matter.

#### ***4.7.1.5 Values, emotions and motivated reasoning in sense-making***

The preceded element of individual cognitive sense-making was purely dispassionate cognitive in perspective while debates about reform goes beyond scientific and empirical questions about the conditions of learning and the effective ways to teach. However, it has been reported that many reform ideas about teaching, learning and schooling are very value-laden, and that the substance of the reforms, implementation of changes in teaching practice, affects the fundamental behaviour that are central to implementers’ self-image. This dimension calls for their motivations, goals and affect to come into play in sense-making and reasoning about reforms. Rich associations of abstract intellectual ideas to deeply held values influence the cognitive processes involved in understanding, interpreting, and acting on reform initiatives. The influence of motivation and feelings on cognitive processing is called “hot cognition” or “motivated reasoning.” In the next sections I give a brief outline of the implications that values, emotions, and motivated reasoning have in implementation sense-making.

#### ***4.7.1.6 People are biased towards interpretations consistent with their prior beliefs and values***

Reasoning about complex judgments can be shaped by goals, affect and biases in numerous ways. Prevailing structures can be very resistant to change because individuals rely heavily on own experiences during argument reasoning than they rely on experiences of external experts. Examples they give from their experiences carry more weight in judgment and decision making than does abstract information. Also, strong motivation can affect the way reasoning is carried out causing people to pay more attention to information aligning with the

desired outcome or to markdown non-aligning information. There is mainly a tendency for the implementers to focus on information from the consistent experience with the biased point of view which see things working out well. Equally, motivation toward an effect can also influence the speculation we make in reasoning so that we commit more effort to understanding and evaluating undesirable evidence than desirable evidence which is more easily accepted. It also affects the use of personal memories in reasoning and the memory search to remember examples consistent with the target statements are biased. This may lead to the making of quick conclusions and emphasizing unnecessarily on familiar aspects in understanding new policy initiatives and making premature claims to having achieved it.

#### ***4.7.1.7 The affective costs to self-image can work against adopting reforms***

Affect is a core part of memory and therefore emotional associations are an important part of knowledge structures used to reason about the world and may affect reasoning about value-laden issues. The judgments that people make is colored with recovered emotions, causing people to make either pessimistic reasoning if associated with negative feelings or optimistic if associated with positive ones. Strong motivation to maintain a positive self-image is another linked factor. Predominantly when practices are central to their self-concept or self-schema, people provide explanations that they have performed well in the past and try to prove that their efforts have never failed. Emotions and affective responses in reasoning and judgments activate a motivation to affirm one's value. Self-affirmation bias affects judgments by exerting pressure in favor of the view that what one has done in the past has value or reduce whatever intimidation that challenges their self-esteem. Implementing a reform could cost teachers some loss in positive self-image. As advocates, teachers may decide that they are ahead of the curve and are already teaching in ways that are consistent with the reform or motivated to discount the reform idea seeing it as inconsistent with the reality that they know best. On the other hand, teachers might accept that change is needed, but attribute their reasons for not adopting the reform to contextual factors such as learners, parents, and lack of support etcetera. All these explanations indicate that the challenge to self-esteem and the tendency of the human judgment-making to preserve self-esteem can work against convincing implementing agents of the need to change and of the differences between their current practices and the goals of the policy.

In addition, values and emotions are critical components when teachers build new understandings about their practice from and about reform initiatives because they justify

what the teacher understands about reform in their teaching. They disclose the tight links between their values and their emotional experiences in teaching. Nevertheless, the relations between implementing agents' values and emotions and their sense-making, is not well understood as research on emotional dimensions of teachers' work is inadequate. This dimension of emotional dimension of teachers is likely worthwhile to investigate. The associations between the values and emotions of local implementing agents and what they come to understand about reforming their practice from policy is one of the areas where studies of cognitive science and social cognition can help shape new patterns of investigation into the implementation process.

#### **4.7.2 Implementing agent as a social sense-maker**

The practice of sense-making goes beyond an individual understanding; therefore, it is not a solo matter. Interpretation and action are extended in the communicating network of performers, objects, and situation, which make the level of analysis applicable.

##### ***4.7.2.1 Sense-making occurs in a social context***

Spillane et al. (2002), uphold that the element of social context anticipates that knowledge which influences sense-making and action may differ from context to context. It understands that knowledge that people hold is rooted in social contexts as common beliefs and values practiced in particular communities. Given the wide and multidimensional contexts, people construct a variety of identities based on their social, professional, economic, historical, or political backgrounds in which they work or live. Consequently, implementing agents do also encounter curriculum “policy in a complex web of organizational structures, professional affiliations, social networks, and traditions” (p.404). Aspects of the contexts at both macro and micro levels are very significant in the processes of sense-making and identity formation because of their mental schema. To understand and comprehend new ideas and knowledge are influenced by the opinions and beliefs of their communities, termed as “thought communities” or “worldviews.” As with the case of multiple identities, people do also have multiple worldviews depending on their personal affiliations at both micro and macro levels such as nationality and ethnicity, religiosity, social status, profession and political preferences. How people define and give meaning to the world depend on how they are socialized and oriented as children, adolescents and adults and the role they play in their communities.

As members of communities, the ideas of teachers as implementing agents also depend on virtue of positions they hold in their specific communities and which greatly shape and develop their experiences, assumptions and expectations. Like other agents in other institutional workplaces, how teachers behave, and act is situated and directed by the norms, rules and conditions of their school environments which can either have a restraining or facilitating effect on their actions and behaviour. This is because relevant structures at workplaces are defined, explained and given meaning according to such rules, norms and conditions. This supports the notion that both individual and collective interpretations and agency can be enabled or limited by institutional factors in which they are located, since they reveal how work practices, innovations and implementation processes are structured. Both individual and social interactions among agents support reasoning because they provide not only opportunities for teachers to learn from each other, but also enable all the local actors to acquire collective information and develop common viewpoints. Teachers or agents understand their different points of view as they communicate by explaining and articulating their tacit beliefs. By so doing, they make their tacit beliefs perceptible by others for deliberations and arguments; the action that helps to identify conflicts and weaknesses amongst themselves and decide on how to deal with them for mutual sense-making.

#### ***4.7.2.2 Social interactions can shape sense-making in implementation***

Social interactions among agents have been underlined to hold an influential role in the implementation process. Through discussions of shared concerns and problems related to their duties in ongoing interactions among them, teachers negotiate the meanings of the nature of their work and create mutual understandings of their needs depending on their school contexts. The process of sense-making is shaped by social interaction patterns which are situated within school contexts, because they guide the nature of interactions such as who is talking with whom, about what, in what setting, the atmosphere of conversation, and the extent to which the conversations allow for open and comfortable involvement and deliberation. These situations are important as teachers in different groups, formal or informal, often make different interpretations of similar messages. Coupled with this are opportunities and conditions of learning in the school; school rules and procedures; the nature of teachers' relations to policy messages including level of knowledge depth, determination, specificity, and willingness to implement policy reforms.

#### ***4.7.2.3 Sense-making is affected by the organizational context***

The schedule and activities within the working place such as the school has the capacity to obstruct or aid the conversations regarding policy and practice among teachers. It has been perceived that teachers are mainly nested in “egg-carton” like classrooms where they have little opportunities to communicate with others and understand different alternatives and opinions about policy changes (Spillane et al., 2002). Although there are those main arrangements that all schools are subjected to, they are however different on how they organize the teaching work and the extent to which they provide opportunities that keep and sustain teacher interactions. Such operational arrangements influence the extent of teacher interactions which play a pivotal role in the acceptance and carrying out of educational developments. Another factor that influence teacher sense making determined by school arrangements and norms is the degree by which they provide opportunities for teachers to deliberate on the implementation process of the reforms. To ensure successful implementation, this calls for the inclusion of opportunities for human capital development within the schools’ social capital program. Limited opportunities provided to teachers to talk with each other and revise policy proposals contribute to substantial differences in the meanings that they construct based on the reforms.

Teachers’ work life is influenced by the differences of multiple communities in which they are operating, and these have the potential to either maintain or depress their understanding and what they do in classrooms. Teachers came from different schools with different norms which expose them to different support opportunities and levels of engagement, hence different understandings. School conditions which allow for teacher autonomy and independence to act as professionals, help develop a clear and common understanding of the school purpose and common values within teachers and learners. The regional difference shapes how teachers understand and carry out their professional roles. Regional differences regarding the kind and quantity of resources present to education, and the information sent to teachers about their professional status, aim, and importance by the regional conditions, play a prominent role in shaping the work lives of teachers. Different levels of respect, trust, and value communicated to teachers by regional managers create different substantial regional cultures that may reinforce or destroy teachers’ self-efficacy. Constant faithfulness maximizes the sense of pride and loyalty to the region. The school difference is marked by the norm of collegiality and ongoing professional development which involve professional support and assistance at both subject and department levels; differences in coherence of

purpose; rules of collegiality and targets set for students. Some departments establish strong teacher learning communities with consistent teacher meetings to reflect on practice, evaluate learner progress and share information about new teaching strategies and resource materials. While on the other hand, some departments seldom bring teachers together to share information about practice or learners. They promote teacher individualism and isolation in both personal and professional matters. Teacher networks especially at subject area levels can create significant differences, since they offer opportunities and assistance for inventions and change. Such opportunities engage teachers in dialogue about new technology of teaching to uncover new ideas of pedagogy and give helpful perspectives necessary for considerate change. All these situational variations constitute and account for meaningful differences in teachers' understanding of curriculum changes.

#### ***4.7.2.4 Informal communities provide a social context that affects sense-making in implementation***

Again, Spillane et al. (2002) contend that individual or personal networks and the interactions with other members of professional communities to which teachers are affiliated, position their determinations to interpret changes, and greatly aid the creation of different considerations of policy messages. Subject and school phase specializations, and varied professional identities held by teachers provide multiple lenses through which they understand same policy change even within the same region and school. Therefore, such differed situated sense-making will lead to unlikely efforts of policy implementation. In high schools, teacher professional variations are caused by their discipline areas of qualifications and the subjects they teach. An extent of how different subjects define, provide the scope, and arrange the material, and the rate at which new knowledge is produced (static or dynamic), greatly influence teacher professional variation and consequently curricular practices. Curricular practices involve activities whereby teachers manipulate the subject content, manage and systematize the curriculum; the differences that facilitate the connections between policy and classroom practice.

#### ***4.7.2.5 The historical context affects sense-making in implementation***

The historical contexts at both individual and organizational levels are significant since they provide much of what is learned and known by people, referred to as tacit knowledge or beliefs. Tacit knowledge is actively acquired unconsciously through experience from the contexts in which they live. Learning is active because it involves individual participation in

cultures of specific environment and serves as the basis for individual beliefs and expectations on how to act and behave situations. In their attempt to back up a person-centered approach policy analysis, Lewis and Maruna (cited in Spillane et al., 2002), propose that individual life histories and biographies can be useful analytical tools to explore how policy is implemented. Life stories of implementing agents explain how and why they make sense and respond to reform suggestions the way they do, since their understanding of the reforms are situated in their life stories (Spillane et al., 2002). Different life narratives and story types given by teachers show their different understanding of the reforms.

Organizations such as schools do also have histories that can be powerful influences that shape teachers' efforts to understand what the policy is demanding from them. Unique histories of schools influence the understanding of the changes in curriculum policy and how it will be implemented. Therefore, the history of an implementing school, as included in its customs and levels, aids as a significant framework for implementing agents' sense making from and about policy.

#### ***4.7.2.6 Values and emotion are key parts of the social context***

As earlier stated in personal sense making, emotions and values are also significant aspects in the social sense making about change. However, they are mostly overlooked and understudied. Together with personal approval and support, teachers also require to be valued and recognized. On the other hand, teachers are understood to abate instructional change by encouraging the status quo in teacher thinking, discourage deliberations of different thoughts and knowledgeable differences as they compromise professional improvement opportunities with their friendships. This is done by avoiding condemnation of the shared beliefs and values that underpin their relations (Spillane et al., 2002). However, such discussions are important, since they are good tools to employ teachers in improving their problematic practices by simply exposing them to alternative ideas and leaving them to make their own choices without inflicting chaos and conflicts. Teachers need to be involved in teamwork activities about teaching that embrace a mutual moral commitment to development, understanding and collective accountability, unless the status quo is enhanced and maintained.

#### ***4.7.2.7 A situated perspective on implementation and cognition***

The situativity theory, as referred to by Spillane et al. (2002), draws conceptual tools from the situated or distributive cognitive paradigm, which was just freshly coming in the



implementation research framework. However, the conceptual tools from the situated way of thinking look promising because they bring new ideas in the process of implementation. For Semin and Smith (2013), situated cognition provides a cognition explanation which includes an understanding of the interaction between behaviour, bodily structure and environmental resources (p. 125). Unlike the traditional human cognitive approach which privileges an individual over the social and seeks to understand behaviour as based on the content and structure of mental representations instead of the current social situation (p. 128), the situated cognition changes the understanding that such cognitive activities are fundamental parts of the social and physical environment.

According to Spillane et al. (2002), the situativity perspective involves the implementation process in three distinct ways. First, the implementation practice involves implementing agents to engage in social interaction activities such as curriculum meetings, subject-level meetings, and classroom teaching and informal discussions. Secondly, the day-to-day carrying out of specific tasks is set up in the interaction of administrators, teachers, and learners within their school situations; therefore, implementation is not an individual agent's capability, expertise and reasoning, it is a joint undertaking. The implementation understanding is distributed in the interactive web of the implementers which is larger than the cognitive processes of implementing individuals. Thirdly, the implementation exercise constitutes the multidimensional situation as a component, which involves the social, physical, intellectual, temporal, historical, and cultural aspects. These situational aspects not only influence the implementation efforts, but also delineate the extent to which implementation should be practiced.

The researcher understands that this situated cognition perspective helps this study to look into the social contexts (formal and informal) in which teachers associate to understand how selected teachers of this study interact, share beliefs and knowledge they use to interpret policy and decide on how to implement curriculum changes. The social interactions in the context involve both the affective and the historical dimensions. These views assist this study to expound significant motives behind implementation agents to implement curriculum changes in classrooms in their own ways as grounded in their personal, historical and resourceful aspects.

### **4.7.3 Implications: policy design, representation, and implementing agents' sense-making**

This dimension of the framework discusses about the implications that the cognitive framework has on how the policy is designed. According to Spillane et al. (2002), policy is represented in both verbal and written media, and it includes regulations, directives, legislation, workshops, and pamphlets of different kinds relevant for agents' understanding how to implement it. Despite that this explanatory cognitive framework highlights the point that implementing agents interpret policy signals about local behavior, it thus provides a fundamental role to the policy and its design specifics. It is a fact that in policies it is the implementing agents who must construct an understanding of the policy; however, policy signals and designs have the potential to positively or negatively influence agents' interpretation efforts.

From the cognitive view, the design of the policy is significant, and it is the main reason why some policies do better than others in aiding implementing agents to understand what is problematic about their current behaviour to construct practices that might correct the problems. However, it should also be acknowledged that education standards and policy in general take multiple forms as long as they maintain consistency and clarity. Apart from the influence, they impact on the sense making course of implementers, policy inconsistency and ambiguity which further damage the process of implementation because they intensify agents' judgement and actions on whether and how to practice policy proposals.

#### ***4.7.3.1 Substantive rather than superficial change is very difficult***

Spillane et al. (2002), maintain that attaining substantive or significant change is very difficult to achieve because the process of accommodation or restructuring the belief system (p.395) of an agent is challenging due to the complexity of cognition and the involvement of the emotional encounters. One distinctive nature of policies is that they are not monolithic, that is, they do not provide other alternatives or options, with some policies demand for tremendous changes in prevailing behavior, whereas others seek for less fundamental changes. The compliance that a specific policy seeks to address, and the nature of its change affects how it is implemented by the agents. The conditions of changes demanded by policymakers is also critical because some changes consist of more complex cognitive conversions for implementing agents than others.

Policy change requires three levels of social change. The first level demands for incremental change which entails little or no shift of the existing commitments of the agents who carry out change. The second level of change demands for growth or development for those undertaking change while the current anticipations remain intact. This form of change needs to be fused into existing representations and contexts rather than undermining them. The third level of change represents loss for the implementing agent because it questions and challenges the agents' schemas and frameworks, and this nature therefore makes this level of change difficult to achieve. The more the social change is demanding or challenging the existing schema of the agents or requires the agents to give up some of their existing beliefs, the more the existing schemas need to be reorganised to form coherent understandings of the new ideas. This requires great efforts from the side of implementers.

Policy standards that persuade for tremendous change demand teachers to unlearn a great amount of what they already know and believe about instruction. They need to possess a deep understanding of the key aspects of their work in different ways other than their basic existing cognitive scripts, so that they can essentially change their models for teaching to comprehend what the policy proposal entails for their classroom practice. The cognitive framework is considered relevant for all levels of social change promoted by any public policy, but it is more effective in looking into policies that press implementing agents to give away their existing knowledge and representations.

The complexity of the policy has power to affect the implementation process. Policy proposals that demand for small and slight changes in the agents' existing schemas regarding subject knowledge and pedagogy, not too much divergent from their usual ways of doing things tend to get positive outcome. Conversely, policies that look for complex and fundamental changes in agents' local behaviour are more susceptible to problems because they touch on and demand to restructure the fundamental knowledge constructions and core beliefs of the implementing agents. Another problem, though discussed earlier, is the tendency for implementing agents to become extremely dependent on superficial similarities between their current practice and the reform ideas. This results in them losing the essential aspects of the reform as they persevere to adapt it into existing knowledge structures and coping with emotional challenges as they encounter problems in their existing practice.

#### ***4.7.3.2 The tension between general principles and specific examples in the representation of policy***

Spillane et al. (2002), find out that there is another factor that has been infrequently discussed in traditional accounts, yet it plays a major role in human cognition regarding policy implementation. It has to do with the external representations which are used by policymakers to deliver their proposals for changing behaviour. These interpretations are said to contain incomplete descriptions of social reality, because they only tend to reflect selections made by individuals who create them about what must be included or excluded, and the kind of problems to be targeted. Still, the full meaning of external interpretations take place only when individual judgements and activities of agents are established on what has been actively interpreted and created once they interact with the messages. The cognitive perspective is appropriate when it comes to analyse how external representations by policy makers enable or constrain the agents' sense-making. It was again revealed that what makes policies different from each other is their external representations, the leading approach used to demonstrate the reform ideas, which involves a sequence of brief, regularly one-sentence statements given as goals or objectives.

Policy makers too on one hand, are faced with serious challenges. The most problematic is the failure to design successful operating systems whereby the reforms are communicated and put into effect, stressing the deep underlying principles but not just superficial aspects of specific examples. Another flaw is the language, and how the policy is communicated. Policy language is said to be in abstract forms making the principles very vulnerable to being understood in superficial and bizarre or unusual ways different from the existing belief and knowledge systems of agents. There is a real tension between the communicating abstract principles and being concrete enough to provide sufficient constraint on the understanding of the implementation process. The way in which the rationale that encourages a reform is communicated to the implementing agents is also critical. Practices implemented in superficial methods can miss the fundamental intention of the reform. This may result in a danger of adopting a practice without its full understanding of the underlying idea which lead to different 'lethal mutations' (p. 416). Furthermore, when teachers' practice is observed to be defective from the required teaching behaviour many teachers tend to defend their teaching activities as in line with the reform, the belief termed as "false clarity." This is because they have developed a superficial understanding of the reform, seeing the change idea as a set of practices without understanding the underlying principles.

#### ***4.7.3.3 Policy must affect a system of practices***

The main trouble in communicating the abstract ideas of the policy is how to represent ideas of a practice system. It becomes inconsistent when change ideas are interpreted as consisting of specific practices basically out of context. It is inaccurate for teachers to interpret the reform ideas as an isolated action for a specific student activity other than addressing the system of practices essential for the underlying idea. Change of policy idea does not happen in a lonely activity; however, it entails a diverse model of work for students in which classrooms follow a continuing chain or sequence of activities, habits and norms daily. It represents a major shift in how students think about a subject and how they understand their role as learners. It is a change in both activity and central discussion, and a change in both cognitive understanding of practices and social relations of learners and teachers. It is a reform that needs teachers to cope with underlying ideas and complicated theoretical change and reconsider the whole system of interrelated attitudes, beliefs, and practices; rather than learn only shallow type of change regular activities.

Some policy representations have succeeded in facilitating an effective sense-making of their users as they helped them to develop better understandings of the intentions of the designers. A better representation involves delivery of broad and deep explanations of the changes in existing behaviour as improved through policy, without giving too much emphasis on how the new ideas are explained. As discussed earlier, one of the challenges in the sense making process is the tendency of agents to draw analogies of new ideas based on superficial, rather than structural characteristics of their existing knowledge. This activity significantly results in misunderstanding of the new information, and it is therefore worthwhile for the policy representation to advocate agents to “look beneath the surface” by contrasting possible form- and function-based understandings of central reform ideas. In the same way, it has also been perceived that new ideas which are presented in a way that closely corresponds to the previous understanding of agents, are likely to be accepted and used, leading to change of the directed behaviour. Therefore, it seems to be a better idea to use the users’ previous knowledge as power in the representations of the reform ideas. Given that such representations build on and engage users’ existing schemata, they stand a good chance to enable users to construct understandings which are closer to the aims of policymakers. The sense-making of the implementing agents is very critical in the implementation process, so as the conditions of external representations communicated to agents in how they are designed to ensure that implementing agents and agencies match.

Improving practice of policy messages is represented in multiple ways. They comprise of education standards in the form of legislation, standard documents, student assessment instruments, government and professional pamphlets of various sorts, and professional development workshops. Besides, government standards usually provide a variety of representations of any specified knowledge about improving teaching. Such reform representations however, are not identical in their principles since each carries a slightly different message about the change of teaching.

#### ***4.7.3.4 The system for providing support for sense-making is as critical as the content of the message***

The main concern regarding curriculum policy change is how implementers interpret and make sense of it, which is done through the process of dissemination or communication. However, simple communication of the policy is not enough, there is a serious requirement for the arrangement of learning opportunities where teachers interact to create explanations of the policy and understand its effect on their usual performance. To better attain enhanced results, the policy should provide extended learning opportunities with mechanisms for spontaneous feedback accepting errors as an essential ingredient. This is done by creating specific learning networks at either regional, or local levels where for example, subject teachers learn from their experiences grounded in the curriculum and instruction of their specific subject areas.

#### ***4.7.3.5 The tension between creating dissonance and triggering rejection***

The rearrangement of the implementing agents' mindsets stresses two things. The first is a prerequisite to make implementing agents capture that the prevailing model has difficulties and needs change. Another is the need to give attention and caution to the provision and availability of resources and ensure that support attempts are in place to help implementers make sense of the new idea. Therefore, instead of seeing new ideas accomplished within the current practice it is very important to create a sense of dissatisfaction or dissonance within the agents that helps them to see weaknesses in the current practice of the policy. Dissatisfaction with own performance is significant because it makes an agent to reconsider and re-examine own beliefs. To avoid the normal tendency towards self-affirmation and resistance to change that leads to looking for errors in or explain away the reform idea, it must be done in a positive way. For that reason, policy reformers need to establish inviting contexts in which teachers or agents look closely and think deeply about the useful resources

needed for operation. Real and concrete examples from practice should be given first before they are generalized so that teachers do not interpret ideas through their own representations for practice.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework adopted in the study. It has provided the brief history of education policy implementation through different stages or waves. It has also explored the two main perspectives regarding how policy should be implemented, as well as the top-down and the bottom-up perspectives. Although the two perspectives do not necessarily consider the social contexts of the implementers, this chapter established that they are different. The top-down sees teachers as automatons who only need professional knowledge and skills and teaching resources to carry out the required tasks; whereas the bottom-up perspective understands that incentives to maximize teacher behaviour such as enticing remunerations, promotions, strict rules and awards, encourage teachers to effectively implement policy reforms. The concept of sense-making has been defined and how it is used in this study explained, as well as how the concept of sense-making and the curriculum policy implementation are related. Lastly, the chapter provides the brief history of cognitive sense-making from the purely exclusive, which does not consider aspects from social and policy contexts, to the integrated cognitive sense-making model that incorporates the ignored dimensions which is adopted in this study.

## CHAPTER 5

### FRAMING THE RESEARCH

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research framing of the study. The presentation starts with the research paradigm and then proceeds with the design, approach, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations chosen for and employed in the study. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, responses and feelings of Namibian teachers about changes in the curriculum. The focus, purpose and nature of the research questions directed the framing of the study and this chapter therefore, aims to present the procedures chosen and followed in answering the leading question and its three critical questions as follow:

❖ *How does the learner-centered approach in Namibia affect teachers' lives and work?*

1. *What are the teachers' experiences of the learner-centred approach?*
2. *How do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centred approach?*
3. *Why do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centred approach the way they do?*

#### 5.2 The Research Design

A research design is explained by Babbie and Mouton (2011) as a plan or a blueprint which describes how the researcher aims to conduct a scientific inquiry. Similarly, Kumar (2011) defines it as “a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems” (p. 94). It was through the research design that the researcher decided and explained how data would be generated from target participants; how participants were selected; how data would be analysed and disseminate the findings to others, and provide the reasons and justifications why it is done that way. This study is positioned within the qualitative design because of the following reasons. Firstly, the objective of the study was explorative and intended to look for in-depth understanding of teacher experiences on curriculum change phenomena. Secondly, the study intended to collect thick data which was of textual type and lastly, the underlying interpretive paradigm and interpretive analysis method of the study corresponded with the qualitative design chosen. Under this design, the narrative approach, procedures followed to choose the study



participants, data generating instruments, and data analysis methods employed for this study are described.

### **5.2.1 Qualitative interpretive paradigm**

In attempt to understand teacher experiences and emotions within their working contexts, the approach of this study was aligned within the constructivism and human empathetic understanding. From a constructivist and empathetic understanding or *verstehen* opinion, individuals do not construct their understanding of experience in isolation, but they do it within their historical and socio-cultural contexts (Neuman, 2014). This implies that this study considers the implication of the experiences that teachers create within the contexts they find themselves.

A paradigm or world view is defined as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Creswell, 2007 p.19) and a "set of meanings which people use to make sense of their world and behaviour within it" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007 p.10). However, Neuman (2014) defines it as "a general organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers" (p. 96). This implies that paradigms provide the system of thinking onto which theory and research are based. Paradigms direct the epistemological beliefs, perceptions and assumptions the researcher holds for a phenomenon. This study sought to explore how different personal and situated experiences of teachers shape their personal and professional practice. The inquiry draws from the interpretive paradigm which is based on empathetic understanding or *verstehen* of lived daily experiences of people in their natural settings (Neuman, 2014). It is through this understanding that the researcher discovers those reasons or motives that direct teachers' decisions for behaviour and actions. Since interpretive paradigm is more concerned about individuals, it therefore lends itself to subjective understanding of human experience (Cohen et al., 2007). This enables the descriptions of teachers' accounts for their personal and professional lives.

The ontological belief of constructivism asserted by Neuman (2014) that human beings could create meanings and make sense of their worlds has greatly influenced the choice of design and approach adopted in this study. As Creswell (2007) proposed, the study was conducted within the school contexts where participants work, and strategies and questions were adjusted as they emerged out. This implied that the school contexts were described in detail and field questions were continually revised as determined by field experiences.

Neuman (2014) defined epistemology as “an area of philosophy concerned with the creation of knowledge; focuses on how we know what we know or what are the most valid ways to reach truth” (p.95). The epistemological nominalist position suggested that reality was constructed from the outcome of a constant process of actions and interpretations of individuals as determined by their actual places and times and accepts that objective reality was inseparable from interpretations or effects of time and place it happened. Therefore, to generate and dispense considered interpretations of study participants in their specific contexts and timeframe the researcher needed to interpret what was said or done in its social settings cautiously. Nevertheless, this went hand in hand with the reflection of own experiences and interpretation (Neuman, 2014).

The study was also informed by an assumption that events and people were unique and likely result in multiple realities and interpretations of what characterise events and phenomena investigated. According to Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2004) and Cohen et al. (2011), it was important to understand the phenomena according to the meanings that participants ascribed to them, and not according to that of the researchers. This was because, unlike positivists, interpretive researchers understood that humans, as active and creative as they were, their actions and behaviour were deliberate and intentional, based on the meanings and justifications attached (Cohen et al., 2011). This implied that the behaviour and actions of teachers in response to the curriculum was influenced and directed by experiences, knowledge and interpretation they attached to it. Therefore, this study found it necessary to understand through the eyes of the teachers who were at the forefront of the learner-centered implementation. They were the only ones who could provide explanations behind their behaviour and actions better, as dictated by their social, political, cultural and historical contexts at both personal and school contexts.

### **5.2.2 Narrative approach**

This study adopted a narrative approach. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative approach is “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” within a “mutual construction of the research relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories” (p. 4). A shared narrative is a co-construct which is made by the construct of the participant, and by the reconstruct of the researcher interpretation through an inquiry.

Schwartz (2001) interpreted that “narrative inquiry is the study of experience... a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally” (p. 40). Narratives differ from other texts in terms of “sequence and consequence” (Riessman, 2008 p.1). According to Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) narratives entail three commonplaces of inquiry space namely, temporality (time), place (situation) and sociality (interaction) which specify the dimensions of inquiry space which are used as a sorting device to identify and locate themes. The interpretation is made within a specific context at a time. It is based on the epistemological assumption which suggests that we, humans, “come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narrative and narrativity that we constitute our social identities” (Somers, 1994, p. 606). It is through the act of telling stories or story-telling and description of stories being told that we come to know who we are and who others are. The study made use of the policy reform as the context in which teachers experience and engage with change ideas. The temporal or time aspect was the duration of time that participant teachers have been exposed to reforms and engagement experiences.

Narrative approach was seen applicable to many research fields including education because, notwithstanding its focus on human experience, it was also a fundamental construction of human experience and produced a holistic quality (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) describe that narrative is as old as life itself, existing in all ages, places and societies, making it thus international, trans-historical and trans-cultural. They are told in social relationships and are thus cultural texts (McAdams, 2008 p.246). This implies that narrative approach has existed long before, used by all generations in all contexts. The approach is known for its potential to drive reflection (Schwarz, 2001), because in telling stories people recall events of the past, organise them in order, find potential reasons why they happened the way they did, and deliberate on those they think impacted on their individual and social lives. It enables teachers to reflect and collect their experiences from diverse backgrounds and contexts; and the impact they make in their classroom lives in implementing the new curriculum policy, learner-centred education. According to Schwarz (2001) narrative approach renders both humanistic and constructivist opportunities, and honours teacher voice. Humanistic does not only underscore teachers’ pride and prestige, value and ability for self-actualisation, but also involve the whole human being both emotionally and intellectually; hence it is stated as holistic. A constructivist opportunity enables teachers to create their understanding of contextual events in which they live, makes teacher education and practice more realistic, and gives teachers more ownership of their own

growth and development. This study has chosen to use the narrative approach because, it aims to foreground teachers' voice and understands who they are and what they know, how they think and make classroom decisions, and why they behave the way they do.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) posit that narrative approach is in the vicinity of qualitative design, since it is subjective to individual and personal viewpoint, and chiefly focuses on how individual people understand the world, qualities of life and education. The intention thus, of using a narrative as an approach is threefold. First, this study is empirical and focuses on individual teachers in specific contexts to understand their experiences of how they shifted from the old traditional teacher-centred to the modern learner-centred curriculum policy within their historical, socio-cultural contexts. The chosen approach will allow teachers an opportunity to learn about themselves as they express themselves through stories. Second is the positionality of the researcher as an insider. The researcher is aware that she is not the principal informant and is subjected to "bracket" her own experience and bias; although, at some point the opinions as a co-constructor would be integrated into this study. This was possible because through inquiry, the researcher can make interpretation in the reconstruction of the shared narrative (Schwarz, 2001). This study therefore addresses both the researcher's voice and participants' voices. Third, since narrative approach is open to many diverse data collection techniques (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000), it allows this study to use a combination of story-telling and semi-structured interviews to solicit information about teacher practices and identities based on past experiences, and how those past experiences influenced their present and consequently the future experiences.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the concept "narrative approach" is both a phenomenon and a method. The phenomenon denotes the story being told by people who, by nature, lead storied lives and story-tellers. The method denotes the narrative as a structured quality of experience being studied which is written by researchers. Therefore, this study found narrative approach to be an appropriate approach because, as asserted by Bates (2005), it aimed to foreground the voice of the marginalised and the neglected like teachers, to help understand how they make sense of their changing curriculum policy experiences in their teaching contexts. Teacher voice is argued by Hargreaves (1996) as a special medium that "carries the tone, the language, the quality, the feelings, that are conveyed by the way a teacher speaks or writes" (p. 12). As stated earlier, narrative approach is holistic, involving the cognitive and the emotional aspects of human beings. Teacher voice uncovers and reveals

knowledge of what teachers think as well as their emotional side regarding curriculum policy engagement experiences.

Authors such as Drake, Spillane, and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) and Drake and Sherin (2006) argue that narrative as a methodological approach facilitates understanding of teacher sense-making or interpretation. They maintain that it is through stories or storytelling that teachers come to understand their sense of self or identity because the themes, plots and characters used in story-telling reveal the ways in which individuals know themselves and their lives. Narrative research through life-history interview is believed to be the powerful method for eliciting stories from the individuals. And, as they tell their lived stories teachers see themselves through the lens that help them to understand the content and context of their work, as well as all their attempts to adapt their teaching methods and practice as professionals. In other words, stories help teachers to construct and understand their personal and professional realities as well as own responses to changes in the reform contexts. The process of adapting and changing of teaching practices and approaches involves learning which, in some cases, is radical because it demands teachers to discard their existing practices and beliefs. This indicates that deciding to change teachers' teaching practices in line with the policy demands means redressing their identity. Since identity refers to "who or what someone is, the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed by others" (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000, p. 750); it thus includes personal knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change. Given that learning is a situational process, it also matters to understand that teacher learning of new practices and approaches can be either facilitated or limited by their school conditional and situational factors. They shape what must be learned and the way it must be learned by the teachers. As unique learners, teachers respond to changes in different ways as subjected by the knowledge, beliefs and dispositions they hold because they are deeply crammed into their identities as humans.

According to Kelchtermans (2009), narrative serves as an effective approach to identify and analyze teacher thinking and reasoning to better understand their behaviour and actions towards the policy changes. Through story-telling, what is in the heads of teachers is disentangled and exposed as they make sense of events, situations and problems they encountered in the process. Narration also discloses the feelings they attach to such experiences. Since this study is aiming at examining and understanding teacher reasoning and

emotions, I therefore found the narrative approach as a methodology working well with the cognitive sense-making theory chosen for this study.

### **5.2.3 Significance of narratives in studying teachers implementing curriculum reforms**

Teacher responses to education reform are part of the sense-making process. According to Drake (2006), the sense-making process involves an interaction of personal understanding and implementation; whereby the two inform each other iteratively. The understanding and interpretation of an individual regarding the policy guide how the reform would be implemented, and in return the implementation informs the way it is interpreted. Thus, any change in one would result in the other being affected.

To understand the reasons or motives behind the decisions that lead to behaviour and actions of individuals, researchers (Drake, 2006; Drake & Sherin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; McAdams, 2008; Olson & Craig, 2005) find narrative approach as an appropriate and powerful tool to use. This is grounded on the argument that through story telling people do not only understand and know the world around them, but also come to know themselves better. For Craig (2001) and Clandinin and Connelly (1998), teacher experiences and their role in education reforms can be well understood with the use of narratives because teachers express their reform experiences as they live them; hence “lived experiences.” Sound knowledge of how teachers respond to and engage with education or school reforms has been achieved by understanding their experiences through reform stories on a constant basis. This is because individuals have narratives of their own which make them know what directs them and where they are heading to (Olson & Craig, 2005 p.162). Therefore, exploring teachers’ experiences and knowledge of reforms through narratives assist the researcher to understand the factors that direct teachers and the techniques of instruction they employ to achieve their anticipated objectives.

Olson and Craig (2005) uphold that narrative approach exposes an account of teacher beliefs and knowledge within the contexts of their experiences because teacher stories “represent insider knowledge and insider membership” (p.163). It thus, enables researchers to understand how such beliefs, knowledge and experiences are interconnected. This suggests that since the narrative approach is significant in contextualising the beliefs, knowledge and experiences it also highlights the integration of what teachers know, believe, and experience in their contexts along with the emotions they ascribe to their knowledge, beliefs, and experiences. The joint interpretation helps provide knowledge on how individual teachers

construct, preserve, assess, and modify their beliefs about themselves and their contexts. It also determines the kind of emotions attached and consequently the influence they make in the selection of the teaching approaches used to implement the reforms. This procedure directly entails both individual and contextual aspects of the sense-making process and it obviously indicates the relevance of using the narrative approach in studying implementation of curriculum reforms by teachers.

### **5.3 The Research Context**

The context in which the study was conducted is significant because it contributes to the experiences and responses made by the teachers. Therefore, it should be explained in a clear manner because it is the very core element that can problematize the implementation of the policy reforms (Blignaut, 2011).

The study was conducted at a certain point in time, twenty-five years after the Namibian independence. To understand the Namibian teachers, we need to first obtain knowledge from their larger historical, social and political contextual backgrounds. Chapter 2 of this study provided the historical-contextual background of the Namibian education. The phases of education structure through which Namibian people went through namely, the traditional or pre-colonial education, the missionary education, German colonial education, South African Apartheid education, education during struggle, post-independence education, and teacher education and training were provided. The chapter also gave the structure and the nature of curriculum changes in the independent Namibian education system.

The researcher conducted fieldwork in one of the central northern parts of Namibia, Ohangwena region. As earlier stated in Chapter 2, the northern regions were inhabited exclusively by the most disadvantaged racial group of the *Apartheid* system, the native Blacks. The elite groups, the Whites and Coloureds, inhabited the central and southern regions where better education infrastructures were supplied, and better qualified teachers were attracted because of better services and opportunities. These inequalities continued to persist in the post-independence Namibia. Even after independence, schools in Ohangwena were still reported experiencing basic problems such as teacher housing, communications and electricity (Namibia MoE, 2004).

The socio-economic context of Ohangwena region had the potential to attract the attention of researchers. It has been categorized as one of the least developed regions regarding water and

electricity supply, human resources and communication such as tarred roads and network communications. The report of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of the National Planning Commission of Namibia indicated on incidents of poverty and poverty shares by region, ranked Ohangwena the second at 44.7% and 17.5%; following the highest Kavango region at 56.3% and 17.8%; and Oshikoto third at 40.8% and 12.7% (National Planning Commission, 2008). In addition to poverty, the region was also rated the highest in population density (Namibia National Planning Commission, 2004) and it was among the most overcrowded and under resourced in the country (Cohen, 1994). The classroom resources index used in SAQMEC 2 indicated that the north central regions: Ohangwena, Oshana and Oshikoto were worst off in terms of classroom resources (Makuwa, 2005). Personally, it was the region of the researcher's origin and familiar with it was also the area where the researcher taught for most of her teaching career. The researcher had the advantage of good communication and understanding because her Mother Tongue was spoken there. As a researcher therefore, she found worth in exploring experiences and responses of teachers in Ohangwena region to understand how they coped with the radical shift posed by the learner-centered education policy within their socio-economic teaching contexts.

The following are brief profiles of the three secondary schools where the researcher conducted the focus group interviews. For the sake of anonymity, the schools were identified as A, B and C in the same way the interviews were conducted.

### **Profile of School A**

The school was founded in 1967, situated in the deep rural village about 5km from the tar road and approximately 30km East side of the nearest developing town centre. The school community was chiefly inhabited by low to middle income families, generally traditional subsistence farmers who grew mahangu and kept domestic livestock such as cattle and goats for survival. The community had water supply of collective water points where people fetch water. Only few households in the school vicinity had electricity. No employment opportunities were available in the area and therefore, many parents in the community left the place for the big towns for jobs to be able to support their children financially. This forced many biological parents to leave their small children in the care of grandparents who were older and academically inappropriate to do the supportive task of educating the Namibian child with teachers at school.



The school has electricity and water supply. The staffroom looked new at a standard level, but there were no library and laboratory by the time the interview was conducted. The school had a shortage of classrooms as many of them were just makeshifts made of corrugated iron. However, a building construction was underway for additional classrooms.

School A was a combined school started with a pre-school to grade 10 and has a population of around 750 learners and 28 teachers. Almost all learners trekked to school, of which some distances were of about 7km. No teacher accommodation was available at school, many teachers commuted from outside where they rented accommodation, some 10km away from the school. However, some teachers erected their own temporary accommodation makeshifts in the school vicinity.

### **Profile of School B**

School B originally was established in 1994. Though it was in the rural area, it was very close to the tar road within the approximation of 20km South Eastern of the nearest developing town centre. Like School A, the community of School B was also populated by low to middle income traditional subsistence farmers. The community also had water and electricity supply with few to moderate households that had access to those basic services. Employment opportunities also forced many parents in the community to leave their houses to look for jobs in big towns to be able to support their children financially, leaving their growing in the caring hands of old and weak grandparents. Some children were reported as heads of their households due to death of their parents or caretakers. This put some learners at risk of vulnerability when it came to social, economic and educational lack of support as they became victims of abuse and poverty. This factor made the work of teachers at school difficult as they could not receive appropriate support and assistance from the parents for effective education.

The school had access to electricity and water supply services, although some classrooms did not have electricity. It had a staffroom at a standard level and the laboratory not well supplied and updated. There was no library, the school used the old small staffroom to keep it outdated books of which many were reading books. The school had classrooms as no learner was taught in a makeshift class made of corrugated iron or whatsoever, though not enough to enable the learner-rotation system used by the school. Nevertheless, the physical condition of many classrooms was not conducive because it had cracks and leaking roofs that posed a

health and safety hazard to teachers and learners. Many classrooms were a building construction underway.

School B was a junior secondary with only grades 8 to 10 and the small population of approximately 400 learners and 16 teachers. Many learners walked, while few of them used other transport ways such as bicycles to school. Some learners travelled as far as approximately 7km to reach school. The available teacher house could only accommodate three teachers, preferably of the same gender, at a time. Therefore, many teachers travelled short to long distances to school every day.

### **Profile of School C**

School C was founded in 1968, situated in the new proclaimed developing town near the Namibian-Angolan border. Although the school was surrounded by a powerful traditional community of subsistence farmers, the community was fast changing into a semi-town as the business sector was fast expanding and eliminating peoples' residences. Coupled with that was the fast formation of informal settlements by the people who mostly came to work at different business companies in town. Community residents including learners were in daily interactions with different others from other parts of the country and the neighboring country Angola. Such communications exposed people in the community to diverse cultures and traditions, causing them to lose some of the cultural morals and norms, and adopt strange ones. As in the case of the other two schools described earlier, many learners were also left in the hands of their grandparents or other caretakers, while their parents went to look for jobs somewhere else. Poverty and hardships forced some learners, particularly boys, to be recruited as employees by business companies or do casual work after school for the survival of themselves and their families.

Basic services such as water and electricity were available, and the school had a staffroom like those at other two schools. No laboratory or library was available at school at the time of the interview, but the construction of the library and laboratory building was underway. Although no learner was taught under the tree, available classrooms were in dire need for renovations and not adequate for the learners as they were overcrowded to capacity.

School C was a combined school that started with pre-grade to grade 10 with an estimated population of 1050 learners and 28 teachers. Some learners walked, and some hiked to and from school. There was no accommodation for teachers at school; teachers commuted short and long distances to school every day.

## **5.4 Research Procedures**

This section presents the information about the participants who informed the study. The first sub-section outlines the procedures followed and criteria used to select the participants, while the second gives the briefing about the biographical information of the participants.

### **5.4.1 Selection of participants**

The interpretive and qualitative design in which this study was located was bound to “choosing a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in the research” (Dawson, 2007, p. 49). Cohen et al. (2011) and Henning et al. (2004) asserted that researchers in purposive sampling used their judgments to choose the participants whom they considered in possession of certain features or knowledge desired for a specific purpose. Thus, purposive sampling was used because the researcher made use of her own experience to decide specific criteria to identify the most appropriate individuals. In the same sense, participants who could give this study a broad range of experiences and information as much as possible were sought after (Laher & Botha, 2012). This type of sampling assisted in getting the suitable candidates for the study to achieve representativeness of different experiences of teachers about the learner-centered policy change. On the other hand, sampling was also theoretical to ensure that selected participants yielded greater information for theoretical issues under investigation. The participants were selected through two different processes namely, the individual selection process and the school-based selection process of participants.

The motive for individual selection process of eight individual participants was to obtain information of their early personal backgrounds by engaging them in a story-telling activity which involved the process of reflection and retrieving of information from memory, because it made them recall events of the past, organise, and provide potential reasons why they happened the way they did (Schwartz, 2001). This allowed me to obtain an in-depth data on teacher personal backgrounds such as early lives, schooling and training experiences, beliefs and expectations about teaching, learning, schooling, and communities. This helped to uncover the fundamental beliefs and values which could contribute to the understanding of underlying sense-making factors. Teacher stories revolved around their cultural, social and political contexts. According to Weick et al. (2005), identity lied at the heart of any sense-making and it influenced all features on which the sense-making process was based; hence

the need to look closely into *who* teachers were, *what* they held with them and *how* they saw themselves in relation with teaching and learning (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002).

The school-based selection process enabled the study to attain data from the focus group participants which focused more on the changes they collectively experienced in education since independence pertained to teaching and learning; challenges encountered, and coping ways employed, and the kind of support they received to deal with them.

#### ***5.4.1.1 Individual selection of participants***

In this study, eight participants teaching any subject at secondary level with an equal number of male and female teachers were selected. The study was aimed at teachers from the previously disadvantaged Black racial group, of which all came from the same socio-cultural background. Teacher participants were selected according to personal characteristics such as gender, educational background, and teaching experience; and school contexts such as capacity and resourcefulness. Gender consideration reflected the culture that created specific spaces of oppressive hierarchy and power contests and determined the ways of being and knowing. This was done to understand if there were barriers and differences pertaining to teachers in the past. Education and training backgrounds shed light on teachers' early learning and education experiences, and consequently on teacher knowledge. This enabled the researcher to understand trends of different teacher education training programs before independence. The age factor was closely related to teaching experience; and it was related to statuses like marital, parenthood, beliefs, attitudes and values, expectations and future goals which were good traits that helped to shed light on demographic characteristics and time dimension related to different teachers and their influences on individuals' identity formation and practice.

This study focused on teachers who were educated and trained in the previous traditional teacher-centered curriculum during the pre-independence era and preferably also started their teaching career during the same period and went through the transition to post-independence education. Their experiences of educational backgrounds as learners, student teachers and practice in combination with their cultural beliefs, norms and habits put them in a good position to inform and make us understand the internal tension they experienced due to drastic and radical change of the education curriculum. Though the researcher wanted to interview many teachers teaching at grades 11 and 12 as well, it was thus, very difficult to find them. Most of the participants were only teaching at the junior secondary level, that is,

grade 8 to 10. Eight teachers selected for narrative in-depth interviews were, namely: Panduleni, Hamutwe, Shingodjo, Etuhole, Kanona, Kapandu, Iyaloo and Lineekela. They all came from different secondary schools in the region. The prime focus on these teachers was their personal identity, not necessarily their school contexts; although they were related to their experiences and inevitably used them in their reasoning and interpretation.

#### ***5.4.1.2 School-based selection of participants***

To extend the scope of data collection and to collect data in the context, nine teachers, three from each school, were selected to be interviewed in three different focus groups. The selection ensured that participants were not chosen based on friendship or familiarity with each other, but on the premise of background homogeneity in the required area of discussion. Three teachers at three different schools named School A, B and C were selected. They were interviewed in groups with the use of the focus group interview schedule which was designed by the researcher. The number of group members were narrowed down to three for two reasons. The first reason was time, since interviewing teachers in a group was a long process as everyone had to respond to each question posed. Secondly, it was challenging to find more than three teachers at secondary level with appropriate qualities and experiences at the same school. The other challenge experienced was finding an appropriate combination of teachers in terms of gender at all schools, as most male teachers in the desired range of choice were not found. For example, School A never had male teachers of the required age and experience teaching at secondary level, however, those with a desired age-group and experience were only teaching at primary level. For that reason, only female teachers were interviewed at School A namely, Fimana, Fiyeingepo and Fyeenaye. They taught Geography, Entrepreneurship and Oshikwanyama First Language. Their teaching experiences ranged from 25 to 28 years respectively.

At School B, one female teacher Kandina, and two male teachers Kafita and Kakuna who were responsible for Oshikwanyama First language, Physical Science and Mathematics were selected. Their experience of teaching ranged from 25 to 29 years. School C was represented by one male teacher, Pendapala, and two female teachers, Penehafo and Penelao who taught Mathematics, History and Oshikwanyama. Their teaching experiences ranged between 26 to 28 years. It seemed that many female teachers of the targeted group at secondary level were mostly responsible for mother tongue teaching.

### 5.4.2 Biographical sketches of study participants

Identity is seen as lying at the heart of any sense-making and therefore influences how other features of the sense-making process are decided (Weick et al., 2005). Therefore, to understand *who* the teachers really are, *what* they hold with them and *how* they see themselves in relation with teaching and learning we need to look closely into them (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002). Although the personal backgrounds of teachers differed from one teacher to another due to individual circumstances; they were however more or less homogeneous because all teachers interviewed were from the same racial and ethnic background origins. However, it would also be interesting to find out that similar backgrounds did not necessarily result in individuals yielding similar perceptions and interpretations. In the next sections, the personal identities of teachers in terms of their qualifications; beliefs, values and experiences; demographic characteristics and emotions associated with change innovations are discussed. The table below presents the summary of the characteristics exhibited by *eight* narrative participants who participated in this study:

**Table 5.1: Summary of biographical information of eight narrative participants**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Gender</b>                                 | <b>4 females and 4 males</b>   |
| <b>Ethnicity/race</b>                         | <b>All Africans</b>  |
| <b>Age</b>                                    | <b>Mid-40s to mid-50s</b>  |
| <b>Religious backgrounds</b>                  | <b>All Christianity</b>  |
| <b>Home languages</b>                         | <b>All Oshiwambo-speaking</b>  |
| <b>Marital status</b>                         | <b>6 married and 2 widowed</b>   |
| <b>Number of biological children</b>          | <b>0 to 7 children</b>   |
| <b>Number of dependents</b>                   | <b>0 to 7 children</b>   |
| <b>Teaching experience</b>                    | <b>26 to 30 years</b>  |
| <b>Qualifications</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ 1 Bachelor of Education Honours degree</li><li>▪ 2 Bachelor of Education degrees</li><li>▪ 5 teaching diplomas</li></ul> |
| <b>Qualification to teach subjects taught</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ 7 qualified in their subjects</li><li>▪ 1 not qualified in one subject</li></ul>   |

Apart from gender and experience, the characteristics given above were not pre-arranged or otherwise used as a selection criterion of the sample participants, they only emerged out as biographical information of the teachers who were asked and willingly agreed to participate in this study.

This study primarily focused on the perceptions and practices of long-serving experienced teachers over the past two decades, to understand their inclusive and stretched experiences regarding this radical shift which started immediately after independence. Their extended experiences of educational backgrounds as learners, student teachers and practicing teachers in the two periods, during and after colonialism, in combination with their cultural beliefs, norms and habits put them in a good position to inform and make us understand the internal tension they experience due to drastic and radical learner centred approach. Many teachers who were expected to implement changes were born, educated, trained and started their teaching career in the so-called colonial apartheid riddled with traditional content-based and teacher-centred education. Therefore, what they hold such as emotions, beliefs and values, if opposite to constructivism would likely serve as a barrier to enactment of policy changes (Handal & Herrington, 2003).

The following table summarises the sample of all teachers (narrative and focus group teachers) that participated in the study; names were arranged in alphabetical order.

**Table 5.2: Summary of sample teachers (\*names of teachers and schools altered for anonymity and confidentiality purposes) (Source: Field data, 2017)**

| Name & Gender  | School & Context                | Subject/s taught          | Grade/s     | Experience |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>8 NARRATIVE PARTICIPANTS FROM VARIOUS SCHOOLS</i>   |                                 |                           |             |            |
| Etuhole - Male   | Senior Secondary- Urban         | Physical Science          | 8-12        | 28 years   |
| Hamutwe - Male   | Junior Secondary- Rural         | Life Skills               | 8-10        | 29 years   |
| Iyaloo - Female  | Combined – Rural                | Accounting<br>Geography   | 10<br>8-9   | 29 years   |
| Kanona - Female  | Junior Secondary- Rural         | Oshikwanyama<br>Geography | 9-10<br>8   | 30 years   |
| Kapandu - Female                                       | Junior Secondary- Rural         | Oshikwanyama              | 8-10        | 30 years   |
| Lineekela - Female                                     | Combined - Rural                | Life Science              | 8-10        | 26 years   |
| Panduleni - Male                                       | Junior Secondary - Rural        | Entrepreneurship<br>RME   | 8-9<br>8-10 | 27 years   |
| Shingodjo - Male                                       | Junior-Secondary-<br>Developing | English<br>History        | 8-9<br>10   | 29 years   |
| <i>FOCUS GROUP TEACHERS FROM SCHOOL A – RURAL</i>      |                                 |                           |             |            |
| Fimana - Female  | School A – Combined             | Oshikwanyama              | 8-10        | 24 years   |
| Fiyeingepo - Female                                    | School A – Combined             | Geography                 | 8-10        | 25 years   |
| Fyeenaye - Female                                      | School A – Combined             | Oshikwanyama              | 8-10        | 27 years   |
| <i>FOCUS GROUP TEACHERS FROM SCHOOL B - RURAL</i>      |                                 |                           |             |            |
| Kafita - Male  | School B - Junior<br>Secondary  | Mathematics               | 9-10        | 25 years   |
| Kakuna - Male  | School B -Junior<br>Secondary   | Physical Science          | 9-10        | 27 years   |
| Kandina Female   | School B- Junior<br>Secondary   | Oshikwanyama              | 8-10        | 29 years   |
| <i>FOCUS GROUP TEACHERS FROM SCHOOL C – DEVELOPING</i> |                                 |                           |             |            |
| Pendapala - Male                                       | School C- Combined              | Mathematics               | 8-10        | 26 years   |
| Penehafo - Female                                      | School C- Combined              | History                   | 8-10        | 28 years   |
| Penelao - Female                                       | School C- Combined              | Oshikwanyama              | 8-10        | 27 years   |

The objective of the brief teacher profiles was to highlight the biographical information which could have contributed to their personal differences. Teacher identities, beliefs, subject knowledge and experiences greatly influenced their interpretation, behaviour and actions in classrooms. Teachers who taught at combined schools with both primary and secondary



phases were also teaching related subjects at primary level which could impede or enhance the implementation of policy at classroom levels.

### **5.4.3 Brief history of narrative participants**

The study selected eight narrative participants who volunteered to participate by narrating their personal as well as professional life experiences. This theme introduces these teachers by providing information about them which tell the kind of teachers they were. The histories help us understand their backgrounds, experiences and consequently the interpretation about the new teaching policy changes. Their names were Etuhole, Hamutwe, Iyaloo, Kanona, Kapandu, Lineekela, Panduleni, and Shingodjo. To protect their privacy and identity, pseudonyms they had chosen for themselves are used.

#### **5.4.3.1 Etuhole**

Etuhole was a male participant of 53 years and a family man of three children. Etuhole grew up with his parents in a deep rural village where he was born. He looked after goats and cattle as a young boy. He grew up in a very strong Christian family where values such as listening to and respecting of elders were upheld. Critical questioning, expression of ideas or challenging seniors' ideas were considered as a sign of disrespect. Family responsibilities and roles were divided according to gender.

He started primary school at their village after which he went to a nearby secondary school and then to Oshigambo High school where he completed his Standard 10 (currently grade 12) in 1982. He could not further his studies because he was the only child left with his parents, since all his siblings went into exile. He resorted to teaching as an unqualified teacher to support his parents financially. He got his teaching qualification through a distance mode with the University of Namibia. He was trained as a Physical Science teacher through MASTEP with the University of Namibia in 1999-2001. He was also trained as a subject facilitator and was still a Physical Science teacher at a senior secondary school in a developing town. Etuhole believed that effective teaching was when the lesson objectives of the lesson were achieved after teaching.

#### **5.4.3.2 Hamutwe**

Hamutwe was a family man of 50 years and the father of four children. Hamutwe was born in a rural village near the Namibian-Angolan borders where he also started his primary school. The worsened situation of war forced his parents to move from the borders to another village.

His staunch Christian parents brought him up on Christian values of respecting elders and God and emphasised on good relations between him and others. Intimate relationships between boys and girls were prohibited. Responsibilities and roles were confined to genders. Boys looked after livestock and girls did house chores. Children were not interacting with elders so closely, there was a gap; deliberations, questioning of elders' actions and orders, and expression of feelings were signs of disrespect.

After his primary schooling he went to Ongha Secondary where he passed his Standard 8. Then he went to Ongwediva Training Centre where he was admitted to a two-year ECP teaching course. Most of his teachers were South African armed soldiers. He became a "qualified" teacher and started teaching in 1986. After independence he was enrolled in the BETD in-service program. He held a Bachelor of Education qualification. Hamutwe was a Life Skills teacher at a junior primary school. He believed that effective teaching was when teaching resulted in all the learners achieving the basic competencies of the subject.

#### **5.4.3.3 Iyaloo**

Iyaloo was born in a rural village called Okavale 49 years ago by the time of interview. She was the mother of four and married. When she was four, her newly married elder sister and her husband took her to the then developing town to live with them. She grew up and attended her primary school there. She was brought up with love by her sister and husband. She learned modern ways of doing things like eating on the dining table using spoons and forks; but culture was also emphasized that when eating traditional food like *oshifima* they should use own hands. Since they had all the freedom, they were not allowed to just go anywhere. Respect of elders and greeting them with respect *to tifula* (bending knees), and control of what you should ask elders were stressed. As kids they could not say anything apart from listening and accepting. She attended Sunday school and services and played with her peers. Though she grew up in town, the roles and duties of men and women were still different. Women did kitchen chores and cleaning.

In 1981 to 1983 she went to Omupapa secondary school where she completed her Standard 8. She proceeded to Ongwediva Training Centre where she was admitted to a two-year teaching course ECP, where most of their teachers were *boers*, armed White South African soldiers. Her learning environment was frightening and intimidating as they could not ask, other than memorizing without understanding. She started her teaching career at Hailwa Combined School in 1986. Later on, she transferred to Ekuma Combined school in 1989 when she got

married. She was the Head of Commerce Department at her school. She was a holder of Bachelor of Education honors. She believed that effective teaching and learning were facilitated by cooperation, team work, and sense of ownership as well as the availability of teaching resources.

#### **5.4.3.4 Kanona**

Kanona was born in a rural village Okaleke 50 years ago. She was a childless widow however; she raised up children from her relatives. There was no school or church in her village, so they had to walk a long distance with her peers to the nearby school in the neighboring village every day. She was brought up by her parents; where her father was the head of the house, in charge and commander-in-chief. Whatever he commanded, everyone in the household had to adhere. They were restricted to leave home without permission, moving around after sunset. She clarified that the parental restriction was influenced by the war situation to protect their children from military harassments and because the war zone was placed under curfew. Responsibilities and duties were divided according to gender. The man of the house was the provider of food, clothing and other household needs; the role that compelled their father to leave them for migrant labor. Women and girls did house chores including cultivating mahangu fields, while boys looked after livestock. They were brought to respect Christian and cultural values and norms including respect, listen and obey orders from the grown-ups and not to question, criticize or express feelings.

After her Standard 8, there were only two options available; it was either teaching or nursing training. She went to Ongwediva Training Centre for a two-year teacher training course. She expressed the shock of her life to be taught by White, armed teachers in full military uniforms whom she referred to as “a military attack” when they were heading for classrooms with their machine guns, pistols and hand-grenades. Fear compelled them to memories facts and passed. She started her teaching career in 1985 and taught at different schools. She upgraded her qualifications as she was the holder of two teaching diplomas specialized in African languages. She believed that effective teaching was only possible when all learning needs were attended to. She served as a church and community board member and participated in many church and cultural activities in her community.

#### **5.4.3.5 Kapandu**

Kapandu, a 53-year-old married woman and a mother of four, was born in Ohandje village. Her father, who was the headman, died when she was an infant. She was born in a traditional

family setup because her late father was a polygamist with many siblings especially from her father's side. She knew very little about her father therefore, fatherly role in her life was missing as she was single-handedly brought up by her mother. As the baby in the family, she did the light house chores as she could not be entrusted with important ones such as cooking. Greeting elders with respect and giving them some privacy were some of the principles stressed; they were always correct. She was made to understand that children were not supposed to drink *omalodu* (traditional beer) or alcoholic drinks; and eat as much meat as older people. She should wait to be given at the right time. Disobedience was disciplined with flogs. Discipline, teaching and advising the youth and chasing them to school was a collective and cooperative responsibility for all adult people in the community. Girls were taught to sit properly with closed legs (*okulambela*). Teachers were infallible and noble persons and were treated special. Men were accorded more respect, never went wrong, no counter-reaction, difficult to approach as they hardly mingled with children, and their words were final. Mothers were closer to children, easily accessible and served as mediators between children and fathers.

Schooling was not an interesting "hobby" for Kapandu at the beginning because, most often she returned home and fed her mother with untrue reasons. Since she came from unchristian family, she was simultaneously attending baptismal school during her early years. They were made to memorize poems and facts in fear of corporal punishment. She progressed to Ponghosi secondary school in 1981 and after Standard 8 she went to Ongwediva Training Centre where the only opportunity she found was ECP teaching course. Although there were few Black Namibians, most of their teachers were Whites; members of the South African occupational forces teaching them with guns in military uniform who were constantly changing. She said: "we endured that experience and completed the training, and unexpectedly we became teachers." She had trouble in learning because that was her first time to use English as a medium of instruction. She simply memorized facts and points without understanding. She started her teaching career in 1985 and was an Oshikwanyama Home Language teacher at her school. She held BETD qualification and a diploma in African languages. She understood that only some topics could be approached with learner-centered; some demanded the teacher to explain and give a clear picture and learners should listen.

#### **5.4.3.6 Lineekela**

Lineekela was 45 years old, a mother of four girls and widowed. She was born in Ondunga village. Lineekela was brought up by her parents with six siblings and other children from extended families. As a girl, she grew up doing kitchen and household chores such as fetching firewood and water, pounding mahangu and plucking *ombidi* (kind of spinach) while boys looked after livestock. Parents emphasized values and principles of Christianity and tradition, provocation and fighting were discouraged. She learned traditional songs and games from her peers as they played. As a girl she was taught to respect and keep her dignity as a “woman” by covering her body and sitting with her legs closed (*okulambela*) not to be seen by others. Cultural norms were respected, and respect was earned by showing good behaviour and assisting elders. Special kinds of communication like gestures and expressions were used to warn, tell or show appreciation or disapproval were used among people. Critical and too much questioning was a sign of disrespect and too much curiosity.

Lineekela started primary school at her village and later went to a nearby secondary school where she completed Standard 8. Later she went to a senior secondary school and after her Standard 10 she went to Ongwediva Training Centre for a two-year NEC (national education certificate which was equivalent to ECP) course where they only did subject “didactics” without their content learning. They were trained by Namibian and Philippine teachers. Teaching was more on summary lectures with very little learning aids, tests and examinations. She started her teaching career in 1989 at the same school and was teaching Natural Science and Life Science. She held a BETD in science and mathematics, and a Diploma with a Biology specialization through MASTEP. She believed that effective teaching was a product of thorough preparation and good lesson introduction linking the known to the unknown, and contextualization.

#### **5.4.3.7 Panduleni**

Panduleni was born 53 years ago, married and had six children. He was brought up by his parents with his siblings under tough conditions. House chores were done according to gender; girls pounded mahangu and house chores, while boys looked after livestock. Their school attendance was difficult because they had to take turns on who to stay back looking after cattle and who to go to school. His parents were very strict; no going or staying out till late otherwise they would get spansks. Biblical and traditional values were upheld. Traditional and cultural norms such as stopping whatever you were doing or sitting down to pay full

attention to an older person talking to you; avoiding direct eye contact with an elder person because it signified contempt; and questioning orders by elders were emphasized.

When he completed Standard 8 Panduleni went to work at the then Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM). However, after few years he went back to Ongwediva Training Centre, the only institution in the northern part of the country in the 1980s. He took a two-year ECP course where most of his teachers were from Philippines with some Namibians graduated from South African universities. It was compulsory that they should do professional courses simultaneously with standard 10 subjects which were not easy. It took him time to understand the English pronunciation for his foreign teachers. He started his teaching career in 1989 as a teacher at different schools and he was then a principal of his school where he was teaching Entrepreneurship and Religious and Moral Education. He believed that effective teaching was when after teaching you could see the results through the good performance of learners. It required qualified teachers, good syllabus interpretation, thorough preparation and adequate resources.

#### **5.4.3.8 Shingodjo**

Shingodjo was a 51years old male, born the fifth and the first son of twelve siblings. He was married with six children. Being the first and the elder son of the family put heavy responsibilities on his shoulders next to his father. He looked after many domestic animals of his father, milked cows and prepared milk for the family. As an elder son he had to teach his young brothers how to plough and look after animals. He also had to learn doing girls' work to survive on his own because he was discriminated by the group of girls who were older than him.

He grew up in a staunch Christian family; respect and obedience of elders, trust in God were stressed. His parents taught them respect and obedience of elders, to trust and obey the ten commandments of God. Strict rules were set not to communicate with wrong people and not to leave home at night or staying out until late. Not adhering to rules meant trouble such as corporal punishment or deprivation of food. His parents were his first teachers because in the evenings around fire they taught him many Bible stories, traditional folk tales, riddles, idiomatic expressions and stories of bravery of past kings and heroes. He also got the knowledge of colonialism and apartheid from his father. They also taught him that if he did not respect older people he would die early. He was made to understand that men should be at *olupale* waiting for supper not in the kitchen; because men were the heads, the leading figures

and big ones. Women, regardless of their age were under men. That belief made him bigheaded because he thought he was bigger than his four elder sisters even to the extent of slapping them. He was also taught that as a man he should protect his family and community by volunteering his assistance such as running to help when a specific house was under fire, and looking after animals of the elderly. The friends and community also taught him traditional stories and songs which had a very strong message through playing with his peers. He also got advice and discipline from the elderly in his village.

He started his primary school at his village where they were taught under a tree. He learned Bible stories and songs. Their teacher was both a teacher and preacher at the same time and for many years he did not know the grade he was attending. Afterwards he moved to a nearby school to continue with higher primary grades and later to secondary school where he completed his Standard 10. He went to teaching without professional qualification for 9 years until 1993 when he decided to go for further studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM). He got a BA degree and a postgraduate teaching diploma. He found the teaching course interesting because he was a teacher before. He went back to teaching at one of the senior secondary schools in the region as a History and English teacher. Then after few years he moved to the school at his village as a head of department and later to the current school as a principal. He was teaching History and English. He understood that effective teaching was challenged by insufficient resources, crowded classrooms and too much paperwork.

## **5.5 Negotiating Access**

Access is the stage at which the researcher requests to gain official permission to enter the target field or community to play the role of a researcher. The request can be made orally in person or in writing to an official or the gatekeeper who is in charge of the desired participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Given the hierarchical nature of the education system and schools; one has to deal with the people in management positions first. Permission was requested from the two main gatekeepers of teachers namely, the Director of Education in Ohangwena region and the principals of the schools to which my participants belonged, and from whom the permission to conduct a research study in the region was sought for. A letter was delivered in person by the researcher to the office of the director at Eenhana upon appointment. Negotiations were done through giving detailed information about the objectives, nature, techniques and the measures to be employed to ensure the anonymity of

participants (Cohen et al., 2011). The permission letter was granted which was officially emailed to the researcher the following day.

With the permission letter from the regional director in hand, calls were made to the teachers that were identified as appropriate candidates by the researcher. Introductions between the researcher and participants were done, and the study project was explained; the participants were then invited to participate in the study. After the brief explanation, there was an agreement on the date, time and venue of an appointment. All the eight teachers identified for the first round of interviews received the invitation warmly. The researcher proceeded to contact their respective immediate supervisors, the school principals, to request for their approval to enter the schools and interview the teachers; similarly, their responses also turned out positive. For the sake of formality, the researcher had to report to the office of the principals on appointment days to hand in request letters to the principals for signature and filing. All letters clearly provided information about the relevance and usefulness of the study, researcher's name, contact details, supervisor and the purpose of the study. Participants were also given letters of informed consent which described the kind of information required from them, the purpose why information was needed, and how they were expected to participate in the study (Kumar, 2011). Willing and decided participants confirmed acceptance by signing the informed consent letters. However, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the process. Apart from the written form, they were also debriefed about the purpose and nature of the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) and that their participation would be voluntary and could withdraw at any time from the research study. They were assured that the information they would be provided with would be treated with the highest confidentiality and respect and would never be in any way connected to their names.

The visits to schools took place almost around or after 12 p.m. because, it was a condition of my permission grant by the regional director to ensure that the research should not distract the normal school activities, particularly the teaching-learning process. It was ensured that teachers were done with the examination invigilation before the interviews. The farthest school visited was approximately 60km away from my residential place while other schools were closer within the distance of 15km to 30km. The worst challenge encountered was the unfortunate event when my car got stuck in the mud due to rain. Many schools visited had no tarred roads; therefore, one had to drive through the bushes in narrow and curvy sandy roads, or on bumpy gravel dusty roads.



## 5.6 Data Collection Procedures

To acquire coherent and trustworthy information that would assist in answering research questions, two data collection techniques were used. They were in-depth narrative and focus group semi-structured interviews.

### 5.6.1 Narrative interviews

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), life history is a combination of narratives and stories of a certain period where the narrators or tellers are asked to state and describe crucial events that happened. It is qualitative because it interprets past events by making them understandable and significant. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) understand that a narrative interview is a qualitative technique of collecting data in a setting that arouse and motivate informants to speak about some significant events in their life and social environment. Norris, Guilbert, Smith, Hakimelahi and Phillips (2005) defined it as “verbal acts consisting of someone telling someone that something has happened” (p. 538). This definition indicated that a narrative discourse consisted of elements namely, the narrator (the teller of a story), the narratee (who was told or the receiver), the events (what happened or what was being told) and the past time.

The technique has got its name from the Latin word *narrare*, which denoted to report or to tell a story. It assumed that the viewpoint of the informants was best exposed in stories as they used their own spontaneous language in the narration of events. Fundamental to narrative interview was its intention to “reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants as directly as possible (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 59) in ways they saw it; in their own language, using their own terms of reference; and emphasising actions or participants which they regarded as being significant” (Bates, 2005, p. 16). The main distinct feature of the narrative interview situation was that it substituted the traditional question-answer interviews with the narration schema. However, for probing and clarification purposes, it did also provide an advantage opportunity of combining both. With careful use by the interviewer, narrative interview provided an opportunity for the informers to remember and tell substantial chains of events that shaped their individual and social lives in terms of what occurred, the sequence of how it happened and the connection of events, attached meaning and explained why events happened the way they did (Bates, 2005; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Bates (2005) contend, narrative interview is relevant to studies which are “person-centred” and sought to understand, conceptualise and theorise information on everyday behaviour of individuals, mostly whose voice was often neglected and muted like teachers. I believed that it would assist this study to report and describe events from teachers’ everyday life and reveal the factors that influenced their behaviour in implementing the learner-centred policy.

As a narrative researcher, semi-structured interview schedules as tools or instruments to elicit information from eight individual participants were designed. It consisted of leading open-ended questions on story-telling, focused on teachers’ experiences regarding personal background, family and community beliefs; probing teachers to tell about their lived stories regarding their personal, family and community background and beliefs, as well as their early learning experiences. A semi-structured interview focused on their experiences in professional training and implementation of education changes. The questions aimed to identify the personal background factors that shape up teachers as persons and professionals, examine how they experienced and responded to the curriculum changes since independence and the impact this has made on their person and profession.

### **5.6.2 Focus group interviews**

Focus group interviews were described as forms of group interviews consisting of a small number of participants to discuss an issue for a limited time of one to two hours (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Neuman, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). To understand the feelings and possibly acceptance of the learner-centred education policy as one of the key changes in education, the researcher asked how the policy was communicated to them and how they saw the policy constricted their personal, traditional and cultural values, knowledge and beliefs. The school contexts on how teachers were resourced and provided support; as well as their prominent professional relationship cultures were also deeply considered by probing teachers on kind of facilities, resources and support they had available at their respective schools.

The focus group interviews were found to be a useful supplementary data generating instrument for the narrative interviews because, it advocated teachers’ rights to speak out in their own voice and encouraged group rather than individual voice opinions (Cohen et al., 2011). Unlike the narratives generated through individual interviews, focus groups serve as shared narratives of the target group of teachers because they produced data through social

construction processes (Flick, 2009). In addition, they allow for diverse opinions, ideas and feelings on the point of discussion within and or between different groups in revealing the problematic areas of everyday situations. (De Vos, Strydom, Flick, 2009; Fouche, & Delport, 2011). Teachers were feeling more empowered in the company of each other. Although focus group interview was criticised to be too time limited and economic; however, in the same line with Leedy and Ormrod (2010), it was more informative than individually conducted interviews because it drew ideas and opinions from many participants at the same time. Apart from personal experiences yielded in individual interviews, it was believed that participants in focus groups would assist in interpreting teachers' work lives in general and collective terms to help understand teachers mutually and triangulate data.

The three focus group interviews were conducted around December 2015 and thereafter transcribed. It was the convenient time for participants to accommodate interviews; and for the researcher to have flexible movements. Although they were busy with the marking of examination scripts of their learners, at least they were a little bit relaxed because they were no longer busy with lesson preparations. The key teacher at each school was identified who assisted in the selection of other two teachers based on experience and subjects taught to increase variations. All the interviews were conducted at teachers' respective schools.

## **5.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is described as "the process of breaking up or segmenting the data into parts and reassembling the parts again into a coherent whole" (Boeije, 2010, p. 76). The core purpose of the study was to explore the sense teachers make in relation to the changes of the curriculum since independence as individual and contextual implementers. It also intended to understand why the policy was not applied as intended in the actual classroom practice. The study was designed within the empathetic understanding grounded on the premise that individuals "engage in the process of making sense of their worlds and continuously interpret, create, give meaning, define, justify and rationalize daily actions" (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze, & Patel, 2011, p. 8). Besides, they do not make sense of their experiences in isolation, but within their historical and socio-cultural contexts (Neuman, 2014).

There is a relationship in the way the data were collected and analysed in the narrative research. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative approach could be used as both a phenomenon and method. It was a phenomenon because it constructed the nature and

value of experience to be studied; and seen as a method since it designed the shape or form of inquiry for the study. Narrative research was empirical in nature and therefore data collected was also empirical. Different methods such as field notes, documents, interviews, observations, and story-telling could be used to collect data in narrative research. However, due to time and financial constraints this study has only employed the semi-structured in-depth narrative and focus group interviews.

Eight teachers were asked to give accounts about teaching whereby they pronounced their work and explained the motives behind their actions. This was done by asking them simple and specific questions related to specific life experiences which occurred at specific times and situations for example, probing them to talk about their early life and upbringing experiences. Unlike broad and ambiguous questions over long time life events, explicit questions about specific situations and events encouraged the procession of recalling and reflection of information from the memory (Harley, 2012; Govender, 2012; Schwarz, 2001). I asked open-ended questions around teacher experiences on their personal backgrounds, family and community beliefs; teacher training and teaching experiences; experiences on intensification, time and professional status. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed informal way.

The data was generated primarily from semi-structured narrative interviews with eight participants, referred to as narrative participants. The supplementary data was obtained from three focus group interviews. Once the data was collected from participants it was transcribed and then analysed. The core objectives of the study were to explore how teachers experienced and understood the curriculum, how they engaged with it and the aspects that influenced their understanding and engagement. To align the findings with the study objectives and the theoretical framework designed for the study, a type of interpretive qualitative data analysis, the narrative analysis, was employed. The following sub-themes discuss the models used in the narrative analysis and the procedures followed in the process of data analysis.

#### **5.7.1 Narrative models/approaches in analysing data**

Several models were found helpful in analyzing narrative data. Four models identified by Riessman (2008) were appropriate and considered in data analysis process for teacher experiences and responses of the curriculum policy change in the Namibian context. The models used were: thematic analysis, structural analysis, interactional analysis, and performative analysis.

*Thematic analysis model* put its stress on the content of the text, the ‘what was said’ other than the ‘how was it said’ (Riessman, 2008). According to Esin, (2011) and Kawulich and Holland (2012), thematic analysis allowed the researcher to interpret data by using techniques to identify and sort the themes in the data to be able to explain how the phenomenon was understood by the participants. It was considered a helpful tool to find common thematic elements across research participants and the events they reported. It helped in considering the content of narratives to identify the common codes of data and categorized them into individual, contextual, and policy factors of sense-making. With the use of thematic analysis, I looked for the separate words, sentences and utterances with similar patterns and meanings across the data by reading the narratives numerous times. Different parts of the narratives were then grouped under defined thematic categories as they emerged from the readings. This enabled me to interpret the meaning of the narrative content collected in each category.

*Structural analysis model* emphasized the manner the story was narrated by the narrator or participant. The language or words used were considered because they were the useful objects for close investigation closely above and further than the content of reference (Riesman, 2003). This approach enabled the identification of emotions associated with the words or language used and made inferences on the impact or influence they could make on policy implementation. The choice of words used in storytelling by teachers as they expressed themselves revealed the underlying emotions and attitudes about change experiences and subsequently their engagements with it. The structural model put its emphasis on the “who was telling” the story or the positions of the participants regarding the events and experiences. It thus, enabled me to detect and highlight important or critical experiences and events from the transcripts; arrange events in the order they took place; as well as to determine their usefulness and the impact they had in the sense-making of the narrative content. It assisted me to elucidate the meaning of the narrated events and experiences.

The *interactional analysis model* emphasized the communication process between the teller and listener because it was more concerned about storytelling as a process of co-construction where the two created a mutual meaning or understanding (Riessman, 2008). Interactional approach helped me to reflect on the interaction such as the atmosphere whether relaxed or comfortable, between the participants and the researcher and how that could impact on the dialogue, as well as how the problems were addressed to curb negative effects. The meaning of content was co-constructed collaboratively by the researcher and participants through the

question and answer process. I used this model to analyze the pauses, interruptions, topic chaining and other aspects of conversation to understand how teachers' experiences and interpretations were translated in classroom practice (Riessman, 2008). This analysis assisted to reveal the respective situated such as the political, historical and cultural contexts in which teacher narratives should be understood. This is because by analyzing gestures, pauses and disfluencies I would be able to detect emotions and the level of tension or easiness associated with the experiences and events narrated.

*Performative analysis model* transcended the interactional approach because it extended beyond the spoken word where the process of storytelling was performative by 'a self with a past' attempting to involve, persuade and move the audience with language and gesture (Riessman, 2008, p.5). The researcher analyzed the main features of the narratives, the actors and their positioning in the stories; the settings which included circumstances and conditions of stories told; the performance dialogue between characters; the viewers' response; and the analyst. The model was found useful for studies of communication practices and for detailed studies of identity construction where narrators wanted to be known and how they involved the audience in doing their identities or practices (Esin, 2011; Riessman, 2008). It therefore assisted in understanding how teachers wanted to be known, how and why they implemented the policy the way they did, because by considering teacher backgrounds and contexts, it was evident from the narrators how they wanted to be known and understood. The use of language for example, regarding accountability, allowed for the identification of the level of pressure felt and consequently the underlying factors for behaviour and action.

### **5.7.2 Construction and analysis of narratives**

The presentation of narratives or stories from individually-selected participants required the researcher to listen to and transcribe the recorded interviews. The main focus of this study was to foreground the long-muted voice of teachers (Carl, 2005; Goodson, 2008; Guthrie, 2016; Templer, 2009). Thus, I had to think about how I could create the space for my participants' voice to emerge from the text. Interviews were conducted in such a way that the research participants narrated their stories in the first person. The researcher listened to the recorded audios and transcribed them into written texts personally. At times when gaps were detected the researcher was compelled to revisit the participants for follow-up questions and clarifications. To construct narratives the researcher engaged and immersed (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2014) with the transcribed data multiple times to construct the narratives.

Upon completion, the written stories were given back to the participants to check, comment on any changes and confirmation. This collaboration strategy ensured the co- construction of narratives by the researcher and research participants.

The main tools used to analyze and interpret data were critical questions and the analytic framework, the individual and contextual sense-making concepts and policy implication factors. As it was in line with ethical practice to protect the identity of research participants (Cohen et al., 2011), all narrative participants were given an option to adopt pseudonyms. Upon asking, teachers revealed that the chosen pseudonyms were either their second names or names of their children.

To understand each teacher as unique and an individual, an in-depth analysis of each narrative was done to look deep into their persona and wider contexts. The researcher got familiarized and immersed with the data while listening, writing and reading through the texts over one by one during the transcription process (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2014). Familiarization and immersion with data enhanced good understanding on which good analysis depended. In addition, through reading and rereading the transcribed texts, the interrelated themes and patterns in the data were realized (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 428). The strategy stated by Kawulich and Holland (2012) was used to create a coding scheme through the process of *constant comparative method*. This was done by listing and demarcating the different codes identified. What was to be discussed in each code was defined and indicated. Also, during the coding process, each new piece of information was compared with the existing codes to see whether it would fall into any of them. Then, where the new piece of data did not fall into any, a new code was created. The most frequent words and phrases used, and the topics discussed by the teachers in their narratives as well as the language used, recurrent events, and emotions displayed in their stories were sought after. To foreground the voice of teachers (Bates, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), excerpts from teacher narratives were inserted.

The analysis of narratives was done by finding code words and common themes that were located within different stories but not from only one story. In this study, eight stories from different narrative participants were used. Common thoughts and themes from the raw data were derived in an inductive manner because they emerged from the data but not predetermined. The data was sorted and the emergent information categorised into three dimensions of inquiry namely, time, place and type of interaction involved (Clandinin et al.,

2007). Teacher experiences were analysed within the domains of family, cultural, historical, political and educational contexts. Summarised biographical information of the narrative participants was provided by positioning the data into the place or situation of teachers. Information about the situation or who the teachers were in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, marital and parenthood statuses, teaching experiences, qualifications and specialisations were given. Next was to locate the data into the time frame by giving the brief histories of teachers in chronological sequence. This was done by giving their early life upbringing, family and cultural background experiences; early and secondary schooling; tertiary education and teaching experiences. These findings gave an insight into the cognitive factors behind teacher behaviour and actions of the curriculum reforms.

The data was then sorted according to the interactional method teachers were involved in at personal and contextual levels. As dictated by the nature of interaction, categories and themes that emerged out of the data during the analysis stage, findings were arranged and classified into two main themes namely, **teachers' individual sense-making of learner-centered education and teachers' contextual sense-making of learner-centered education**. The individual category of sense-making entailed personal elements such as experiences, beliefs, dispositions, knowledge, cultural, historical and educational backgrounds. On a similar note, the themes that indicated the involvement of teachers in social spheres such as school contexts, social interactions, school organisations and professional development were organised into the category of contextual sense-making.

However, the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of the sense-making elements posed a very big challenge to the process of grouping and categorizing because some units or codes of discussion fell into more than one theme. Therefore, to avoid reproduction and duplication it was reasonable to discuss such sub-topics in the first main themes, which was individual sense-making, and make references thereof in the others. Again, the inductive reasoning was employed to make interpretations and draw conclusions by “using specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about entire classes of objects or events” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p.33). It was open-ended and offered further explorations, since it moved from specific situations to pattern identifications and further to general conclusions.

All three critical questions of the study were addressed at each level that is, personal and contextual levels. In the first place, experiences such as changes, demands and expectations at individual level that came along with the radical shift of curriculum policy from traditional to



learner-centred policy were identified and explained. Secondly, what teachers said they did to cope with each new policy change was examined and explained. The feelings attached to their behaviour and actions were identified along with the explanation of how they felt their backgrounds were challenged, threatened, changed and constrained by the new curriculum. Lastly, an attempt to link factors from their personal and different backgrounds to understand their responses in implementing new policy was done. The following levels followed a similar procedure to answer critical questions.

### **5.7.3 Analysis of focus group interviews**

The three interviews of focus groups were also transcribed and typed. However, because of time it was only possible to give back the written transcript to one group to do member checking and confirmation. The process took too long for all teachers to go through, for this reason the researcher did not proceed with other two groups. No comment or addition was made on the script received back.

The three schools A, B and C were identified in the same order the researcher visited and interviewed teachers there. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identity (Cohen et al., 2011) in such a way that teachers at the same school have names that started with the same letter for easy remembrance. The thematic analysis (Kawulich & Holland, 2012; Riessman, 2008) was mostly used to analyse the interviews because emphasis was put on what was said rather than on how it was said. It allowed for the classification of data into categories and later into themes to be able to explain teacher understanding of their work. Since focus group interviews were more on school contexts and situations than individuals unlike narratives, it gave more information on the contextual sense-making of teachers. Codes were allocated to categories and then to themes that were already available from the analysis of narratives and new ones were created where necessary.

## **5.8 Trustworthiness of Data**

According to Guba, trustworthiness in qualitative study refers to the criteria “for judging the goodness or quality of an inquiry...” (cited in Kumar, 2011 p.171). Botes (2003), described trustworthiness as standards of truth and value and the neutrality of the research. In the same vein, Kelly (2014) used the concept *communicative validity* instead to refer to the accuracy or truthfulness of knowledge statements obtained from the data collected from the sources. Trustworthiness in a qualitative study is determined by four indicators which are: credibility,

transferability, dependability and confirmability (Kumar, 2011). Issues of trustworthiness serve as fundamental epistemological standards of any qualitative research and they had to be acknowledged in the presentation of data.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings, the following criteria were employed. In the first place, the number of participants was increased for in-depth interviews to ensure that as much and different perceptions as possible were obtained; and, to ensure that the study findings were not constricted by the limitations of some teachers (Neuman, 2014) as policy implementers in understanding the working life of teachers. To ensure variation of perspectives and to increase the richness and thickness of study data, besides the eight teachers interviewed in their individual capacities, teachers at different schools were also interviewed in small focus groups for their collective opinion and understanding regarding policy and social context changes. The researcher then searched for common themes that emerged from the data gleaned from different interviews.

Secondly, the member checking method was employed by sending the transcribed scripts to participants for checking and verification of their responses. Due to challenges posed by remoteness and poor technology in the area, the researcher sent hard copies to study participants to read and judge whether or not the interview transcriptions reflected their opinions and feelings. All participants, both individual and focus group, confirmed that data transcripts reflected their ideas. Along with more clarifications, the validation process has received a higher positive outcome. Another criterion used was to ensure that the collected data was stored at a safe place to be retrieved easily for verification purpose upon request by any interested but eligible party.

Botes (2003) understood transferability as the applicability of the research findings, and dependability as the consistency and reliability of research findings. Similarly, Kelly (2014) defined transferability as the “ability of the account to provide answers in other contexts” (p. 381); and Kumar (2011), as “a degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings” (p.172). The researcher tried to establish the grounds for transferability and dependability that enable other researchers to use the findings in their work. This was established by providing a thorough description of the research process, justification of the research methods followed and provision of a comprehensive account of the research conditions and context of this study.

## 5.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics has to do with what is “right and wrong, good and bad...and consider how the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes abide by ethical principles and practices” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 76).

This study was guided by ethical principles to ensure that it would not harm and breach confidentiality of its participants by ensuring that their anonymity was respected. The information given by study participants would not be used improperly, but purely for academic and research purposes, using information and introducing bias” (Kumar, 2011 p. 242). Before the interview commenced participants were debriefed on what the research was about, the purpose, and how the study was to be conducted so that they would make informed decisions. They were guaranteed that their rights as research participants were protected by giving them pseudonyms to ensure that their real names and schools were not in any way related to data (Cohen et al., 2011). Their autonomy was respected because they were given freedom to withdraw their participation consent at any time of the research process without intimidation. However, it turned out positive as none of the participants withdrew participation at any stage. To find credible answers to research questions, the well-being of participants was ensured in the process by abiding to research ethics codes of conduct as stipulated by the institution, the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The researcher was also aware of her positionality as a non-principal informant and was subjected to “bracketing” her own experience and bias (Henning et al., 2004). To achieve bracketing, the researcher was conscious of her own perceptions, beliefs, and emotions regarding the same experience from the beginning, and this helped her to be open-minded enough to re-examine and put her knowledge aside when issues that might affect the research were raised. This was facilitated, in the first place, by the preparation and use of the semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions which served as the key guide; however, it also gave room for free probing and clarification of emerging interesting issues from the participants’ answers. Probing was based on focusing rather leading questions about the situations and careful listening to the participants was given with minimal interruptions to ensure that the researcher’s experiences were not infused (Chan, Fung & Chien, 2013; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). Again, the researcher bias was bracketed by the delay of the literature review which was mainly done after the data collection and analysis processes. This minimized the impact of the researcher’s pre-understandings to influence interpretation. It

allowed the data to speak for itself since it did not provide an opportunity for the researcher to analyze the data for the themes that they know existed in the literature (Chan et al., 2013).

### **5.10 Limitations and Challenges**

Best and Khan (1998) described limitations as the circumstances beyond the control of the researcher that may restrict or obstruct the findings of the study and their claims to other situations. In the same vein, Price and Murnan (2001) defined limitations as “the systematic bias that the researcher did not or could not control and which could inappropriately affect the results” (p.66). The persistent trend to make mistakes by either exaggerating or belittling the true value of the research qualities has been a concern in any undertaking of qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2011) by either participant in the narration process or by the researcher in the re-narration process or both. The researcher understood that her position as an educator in the region made her hold certain biases, personal experiences and interest aspects. It is acknowledged that, like other qualitative approaches, narrative was also subjective by its nature. Through storytelling, participants could leave out or distort certain messages they sent across because there was usually a tendency for the narrators to produce the “preferred self” narratives as dictated by their underlying personal or contextual purposes (Henning et al., 2004). Therefore, stories were analysed by only pulling out the nature of the story elements to understand their broad interpretations. Again, the occurrences of qualities across all stories and other data were searched for and grouped into categories of shared meaning according to the patterns they had in common (Riessman, 2008; Henning et al., 2004). Another limitation for this study according to Spillane et al. (2002, p.407), the sense-making process takes place overtime. However, this study was purely dependent and relied on views and beliefs, which were not fixed and could change, obtained from teachers through interviews. To minimise over-dependence on individuals and to ensure impartial representations of ideas, the number of narrative participants was fairly increased to eight with the addition of three focus groups from different schools.

This study was conducted on a small-scale and hence its findings and results were personal, subjective and contextual. It therefore could not be generalised in other settings. The reasons for the methods used were clearly stipulated, and a comprehensive account of the situation and context in which the research was conducted was given (Kelly, 2014). However, the audience was expected to use the findings for ‘particularity’ and ‘transferability’ rather than ‘generalisability’ (Creswell, 2009 p.193). This study was conducted in the context of the

Ohangwena region and its purpose was to explore the experiences, feelings and responses of teachers towards the radical learner centered approach to understand its impact on their working lives. Therefore, the context thereof should be considered in cases where its findings were to be transferred to other contexts.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

This chapter gave a detailed account of the choice made for the research methodology and how the whole research process was carried out. In this chapter the attempt to describe the cognitive sense-making theory and the methods and techniques selected best correspond to each other to produce the data and analyses. Why the narrative approach was selected for this study was described and justified and all the techniques developed and used to collect the data explained. Furthermore, the chapter describes the collected data that was analysed. For the sake of transferability and dependability, the school contexts and the procedures followed to choose study participants, as well as providing their biographical information were provided. The ethical issues for consideration were given and negotiations with the gatekeepers to gain the right of access to participants were described. The challenges faced by the researcher encountered throughout the data collection, the analysis, as well as the writing stage of the research; and the limitations that the study was restricted to are provided. The next chapter presents the individual sense-making of teachers respectively.

## CHAPTER 6

### TEACHERS' INDIVIDUAL SENSE-MAKING OF LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter, ‘teachers’ individual sense-making of learner-centered education’, presents the data that explore how teachers make sense of the new curriculum as individuals. The dimension of individual sense-making posits that “what the policy comes to mean for an implementing agent depends to a greater extent on their repertoire of existing knowledge and experiences” (Spillane et al., 2002 p. 393). It observes how teachers narrate the learner-centered curriculum ideas to what they previously held as individuals. The three critical questions of the study are addressed concurrently at personal level. In the first place, the early life stages of teachers are presented to reveal the values, morals and principles instilled in their early lives as well as the learning experiences at school and teacher training. It also identifies and explains the changes, demands and expectations at individual level that came along with curriculum change from traditional to learner-centred policy. Secondly, what teachers said they do to cope with each new policy change is examined and explained. It identified and explained the feelings attached to their behaviour and actions. Lastly, it attempts to link differed personal factors to understand teacher response regarding why they implement the new policy the way they do it.

The emerged data findings are structured into five main sub-themes namely, teacher upbringings; teacher understanding of the learner-centered education policy; teacher beliefs, views and expectations about teaching and learning; tensions between teacher beliefs and values and the demands of learner-centered education; and tensions between general principles and specific examples in the representations of policy. The themes are further subdivided into sub-themes under which different yet related aspects were discussed. However, due to the complexity of the interconnectedness and integration of the sense-making used, some responses would overlap and might be repeated as they fell into two or more sub-themes.

**Table 6.1: Summary of chapter finding presentation (Source: Field data, 2017)**

| Chapter | Research question   | How research questions were answered  | Themes emerged out   |
|---------|---|---|--|
| 6       | <p>1. What are the teachers' experiences of learner centred approach?</p> <p>2. How do teachers engage with and respond to the learner centred approach?</p> <p>3. Why do teachers respond to the learner centred approach the way they do?</p> | <p>1. Identify and explain reforms, demands and expectations at individual level that came along with the radical shift of curriculum policy, from traditional to learner-centred policy.</p> <p>2. Examine how teachers cope with each new policy reform.</p> <p>3. Identify the feelings attached to their behaviour and actions and explain how they feel their backgrounds challenged, threatened, changed and constrained by the new approach.</p> <p>4. Explain and interpret how the individual and socio-cultural backgrounds affect and influence policy practice and implementation by teachers</p> | <p><b><u>Teachers' individual sense-making of learner-centered education</u></b></p> <p><b>1. Teacher life stage experiences</b></p> <p>Growing up</p> <p>School learning experiences</p> <p>Initial teacher training</p> <p><b>2. Teacher understanding of the learner-centered education policy</b></p> <p>Increased participation and involvement of learners</p> <p>Knowledge construction in relevant and meaningful ways</p> <p>Promotion of learner autonomy</p> <p><b>3. Teacher beliefs, views and expectations about teaching and learning</b></p> <p>Teacher beliefs and views about effective teaching</p> <p>Beliefs and views about effective learning</p> <p>Parental and community involvement as condition for effective learning</p> <p><b>4. Tensions between teacher beliefs and values and the demands of learner-centered education</b></p> <p>Repeal of corporal punishment</p> <p>Learners' freedom of speech and expression</p> <p>Learner Pregnancy Policy</p> <p>Sensitive learning topics</p> <p><b>5. Tensions between general principles and specific examples in the representations of policy</b></p> <p>Discontinuity of learning content</p> <p>Content representations are biased and not contextual</p> <p>Crowded curricula versus allocated time</p> |

## 6.2 Teacher Life Stage Experiences

Understanding and interpretation of any change in policy is a cognitive process, and it leads to action thereafter (Ali, 2006; Spillane et al., 2002). Cognitive understanding pulls from the rich repertoires of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that are engraved in the memories of an individual. These are coordinated to serve as a foundation on which the decision-making is grounded on how to behave and act in the execution of a specific activity. As Alexander, et al. (1987) asserted, teachers are not just machines that are emotion- and value-free; they are humans that are attached to their life memories, dispositions, and affective positionings. This sub-theme presents the analysis of findings in relation to teachers' life experiences. This analysis deepens an understanding about how teachers' early life experiences such as growing up, schooling learning and initial teacher training influence their sense-making and interpretation of the curriculum reforms. The findings presented in this theme align with the situational praxis perspective of policy implementation which takes knowing as both practical and active (Aoki et al., 1983), because it admits that personal factors and myriad of identities held by individuals lie at the core of sense-making of any teacher, and greatly influence how other essentials of the sense-making process are understood.

### 6.2.1 Growing up

*Morals, values and principles:* According to Weick et al. (2005, p. 416), identity lies at the centre of sense making and impacts how other parts or properties of the sense making process are understood. Teachers belong to different communities of thought such as political and religious affiliations, marital and socio-economic statuses, and parenthood experiences, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, cognitive capacity and life histories. What they held resulted from such positions regarding what and how they played and interacted in the society, and therefore made them develop unique expectations, assumptions and experiences. All participants in this study hailed from the same racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds and they all grew up and experienced rural village life. All teachers reported that they were born in big families with many siblings and extended family members. Seven of them were brought up by their biological parents, with only one brought up by her mother single-handedly due to father's death at her infancy. One teacher was raised up by her elder sister and her husband in the then developing town. Together with strong Christian principles and values, all participants underlined the traditional Oshiwambo patriarchal mode of family principles and rearing children. Fathers and males were regarded as leading figures and



characters in families, the ones in charge to command and give orders; while females were subordinates and inferior characters regardless of their age (Lehtonen, 1998). They grew up and were trained to behave, do and play roles and responsibilities according to gender, age and statuses as accorded to individuals. As Kanona said:

Responsibilities at home were divided. The mothers and girls had their duties apart from what the father and boys were supposed to do. The father's responsibility was to provide for the households, and it prompted many to leave for migrant labour. The mothers and girls remained home to take care of the household and cultivate the field. The father who went for migrant labour made sure that the household was catered for in all needs. This included school fees, clothing all members of the family, and making sure that there was enough food home.

All teachers concurred that females were mostly responsible for daily house chores such as pounding mahangu, cooking, fetching water and children or baby caring activities, while men were looking after livestock and doing those heavy tasks that require more energy. This agrees with Isaak (1997) that the Oshiwambo culture forbade men to do 'feminine duties' such as cooking or pounding mahangu, but to be performed by women without rest or any free time to relax.

Parental and family restrictions were common in almost every teacher's upbringing. This included amongst many, going out without permission (Iyaloo), staying out till sunset or sneaking out at night (Panduleni and Kanona), close or intimate relationships with peers of opposite sex (Hamutwe, Shingodjo), and associating with wrong or unaccepted people (Panduleni and Shingodjo). According to Shingodjo, wrong people referred to individuals who demonstrated morally or socially undesirable behaviour. It could also be spoken of those who did not accept Christianity and its values in those days, the un-baptised community fellows.

*Discipline principles:* Teachers highlighted that trespassers were disciplined and reprimanded with corporal punishment which was fully accepted and used by both culture and law. All teachers participating in this study had their past backgrounds riddled with corporal disciplinary measures at both home and school ranging from being caned with a stick to deprivation of food. Critical thinking actions like complaining, self-expression, questioning and challenging somebody who was older than you were signified as total disobedience and disrespect. However; compliance and submissiveness though troubled inside, were ways of showing obedience and respect to elders and male counterparts, in case of females. Teachers expressed their experiences regarding how they were eminently constrained. According to

Etuhole, “asking was considered as a way of showing disrespect” and Lineekela asserted “we were not brought up to ask or question elders, we were only told that so, is not done.” Panduleni stated: “as children we did not have that authority to ask why and how, we were just carrying out orders as we were told...no such a thing of questioning why me or how or when, we just had to do as we were ordered to.” One more thing was that they were prohibited to stare adults directly in eyes because it was seen as an indication of contempt and improper training by their parents. In the same line Iyaloo confirmed:

We were not allowed to just ask any question like nowadays...you had to control what you have to ask, not just anything, otherwise you do not show respect. In those days there was no right for children to ask, we were unable, and we did not have anything, our blood vessel was so empty...we just had to accept whatever comes, good or bad.

Kanona also experienced that the predicament they went through was no longer the same, she said: “...questioning and self-expression have come with present human rights. In our times you could be forced to do something simply because it was the parent who said it...you could not complain but simply comply with respect, although you might feel tired.” However, it was interesting to disclose that at times she could be smart and tactful to take advantages of certain situations by saying: “we could not freely express our rights, but one could exploit some opportunities and win some favour by crying like: “Oh mum, I feel tired.”

Questioning elders such as teachers at school could cause others to question and discredit the way parents or caretakers brought their child and labelled for incompetent parenting. Some teachers stated as follows:

In our upbringing we were not trained or taught to ask elders the questions of what all. We were told that you cannot face an elder with those type of questions, you just listen and take what is said to you... we were told from home that when an elder is talking you have to listen...so we did not even consider to ask teachers too many questions, because some questions might not be suitable and make an elder ask how you were brought up. (Shingodjo)

We were not allowed to question elders and to express our feelings...there was nothing like deliberations and questioning of actions and orders...only to respect elders, whether they are of your family or not, stranger or well-known... (Hamutwe)

We did not believe that an adult or parent could be wrong. We regarded anything he/she said to be right because we put our utmost confidence in them. Anything that a parent said was right. (Kapandu)

Kapandu affirmed that elders in communities were exemplary and trustworthy, held high by young ones as people who never went wrong and thus it was unreasonable to question their

actions and orders. It also indicated that the reputation and worth of parenthood was determined by the reflection of their children's behaviour and actions in public. Therefore, for many parents, being strict and dictatorial seemed to be the way out to be accepted, recognised and acknowledged as strong and firm custodians of culture and norms in communities. The assertions above also appeared to be challenging the belief systems of teachers regarding what teaching and learning in the new teaching approach implied, because it exposed them to critiques and questioning and challenged them to give up or compromise their rights and authority to learners. Therefore, it would be reasonable to find teachers not comfortable with some policy changes concerning learner behaviour and questioning some disciplinary measures that were in place at present.

*Family roles and other responsibilities:* All eight teachers who participated in this study were family men and women, of which six were currently married and two widowed. One teacher had no biological child, but others had three to seven grown-up biological children. Few were already, while many were about to be grandparents. Only one teacher with four biological children did not have dependants, all others had a range of four to seven dependants in addition to their biological children.

Along with their family roles and responsibilities as fathers, mothers, uncles and aunties; teachers also reported to have some other responsibilities in their working life communities. Etuhole played a role as a sport organiser at school and community levels. He also served as a member of the school-governing body which dealt with all school issues such as development programs and misconduct cases of school stakeholders. Iyaloo played a role as head of commerce department and the school feeding program, a netball team coach and a counsellor for learners at her school. She also participated in church committees and activities at her local church congregation such as Women Forum and development committee. Kanona served as a supervisor of cultural activities who organised and ensured that the school participated in cultural festivals at constituency or regional levels. Other responsibilities she had in her community included being an elder, a member of a stewardship committee, and a choir member at her church. It was remarkable that she cancelled off her choir rehearsal session for that specific day to accommodate the researcher in her busy schedule for an interview. She said: "I am a member of our church choir, even right now I was supposed to be at the choir rehearsal in our church." Although she did not clearly specify, she said that she was also involved in many activities in her community. Like Etuhole, Hamutwe was also involved in sport activities at school and community levels. Along with his counselling

duties, he also facilitated school health and teenage clubs which promoted the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS pandemic and fostered healthy lifestyles. Lineekela and Kapandu did not report having many roles in their communities apart from participating in some of their church activities such as singing.

Panduleni and Shingodjo were school principals who had to supervise school activities on daily basis and made sure that the process of teaching and learning was taking place in all school classrooms. Panduleni said:

As a principal I have to make sure that everybody is well-prepared before going to class on a daily or weekly basis. I have to monitor all activities around the school, attend to disciplinary cases for both teachers and learners, and meetings even at school department levels when I am invited. I conduct management and staff meetings at school to inform concerned members about changes and other developments. I attend meetings outside the school like circuit, cluster and regional levels.

Given the capacity that they were also cluster-centre principals (CCP), they both agreed that supervising other schools made their work more intensified. Shingodjo asserted:

This school is a cluster-centre and I am a cluster-centre principal (CCP) so sometimes the situation forces me to visit schools in my cluster and at times upon the request of the inspector I have to stand in the circuit office when he is away.

Another important duty they said was carried out at school was to do classroom observation at least once a term for every teacher to monitor and ensure that correct teaching methodologies and teaching materials and equipment were correctly employed and used. The purpose was to identify the problems and render appropriate assistance where the need be.

According to Day and Gu (2007), teacher identity involves their personal aspects as based and associated to family and social duties they perform outside their school environments. It is likely that different roles and responsibilities that these teachers have may put them in unique positions to perceive and understand educational issues in similar yet different ways from what is demanded by the policy. Their participation in spiritual, social and cultural issues at school or community ranks can also serve as benchmarks for their sense-making. Pajak and Blase (1989) point out that there is a need for a work-life balance between such outside activities and personal interests of teachers, and their professional duties so that they can leave them time and energy to execute their official duties such as preparing lessons and marking written work of learners. Failure to maintain the balance may lead to teacher's focus being diverted to own interests and outside roles, which consequently ends up in teacher

ineffectiveness and incompetence. Out of fear to be exposed, some teachers may likely attempt to cover up their pitfalls by becoming more complicated and difficult, and authoritative towards learners to find fault with learners.

### **6.2.2 School learning experiences**

All teachers went to school, got their professional training and started their teaching career in the then apartheid South African regime. Their reiterations demonstrated that learning and teaching started at home, with parents represented as first educators of their children. Shingodjo confessed: “my parents were my teachers” indicating that he did not go to school as a *tabula rasa* but had some knowledge and experiences from culture and Biblical teachings learned from home. He claimed that the task of transmitting knowledge and disciplining children was entrusted to any elder person.

However, formal schooling for some teachers in their early years was just a habit, a matter of going because others were doing it, not necessarily because it was important. Understanding of its importance developed gradually. Kanona referred to it as the “order of the day,” Shingodjo said he just attended without even awareness of the standard (grade) he was, while Kapandu used to go back home before she reached school because for her, schooling was just a useless waste-of-time event.

Shingodjo highlighted a series of changes he went through during schooling before and after independence. He marked an abrupt switching code from Afrikaans to English medium of instruction saying:

We were taught in Afrikaans and we came to understand and speak it better... towards independence we shifted from Afrikaans to English...we were not happy with that because the system was going to take us into a problem because we were going to teach things that we did not understand.”

Teachers explained in simple terms how they were taught at school as well as in their initial professional training in terms of teacher versus learner roles in the pedagogical situation. According to Etuhole, it was a “one-way communication;” while Kapandu termed it as a “one-man-show in front of passive learners.” The two assertions indicated that there were no interactions between teachers and learners in class; teachers were lone speakers while learners were just passively listening. The dominant circumstances, conditions and features surrounded general teaching and learning situation demonstrated that it was more a teacher-centred style of teaching.

As highlighted earlier, teachers came from both cultural and educational backgrounds where the relationship between teachers and learners was characterised by respect and authority, and children expected to receive orders from elders and carry them out without questioning. Once again, teachers were brought up to understand that critiquing and questioning elders were an indication of rudeness and improper training by their parents which was not encouraged in both cultural and educational background interactions. As learners, they accorded high respect to teachers; and like own parents, they never went wrong. Teachers were perceived as ultimate sources of all information who had to solely speak and teach in classrooms to provide knowledge; and learners had to listen and memorise information delivered. Having an inferior and junior learner status, Kanona, Etuhole and Hamutwe reported that they were not entitled to question or criticise teachers. Hamutwe recalled: "...you were just sitting and listening even if you wanted to say something or saw something wrong that you wanted to criticise you could not do that. You were only there to understand and deliver what was being taught, no matter it was true or not."

Gazing back in attempt to find suitable explanations for such restrictions such as unquestioning and not critiquing elders Shingodjo came up with an amusing yet credible and candid reason that restrictions were understandable and justifiable in those days since they served as a good cover of not exposing the insufficiency or lack of knowledge and expertise of teachers because they were not very well educated. He guessed that it could bring embarrassment and humiliation. One could assume that certain rules and restrictions were made to protect and cover up weaknesses and flaws. Bantwini (2010), Blignaut (2007), and Tabulawa (2009) asserted that teacher cultural factors and past experiences are powerful in the way they think, perceive and decide to do things in their classrooms; thus, it would be not strange that these teachers were pissed off by learners' critical questions and critiques.

Throughout their schooling and professional training teachers claimed to be taught through drilling and repetition and were made to memorise facts even without understanding. The main purpose of teaching was more on reproducing what was taught for the learner to pass, not necessarily for the learners to understand and apply knowledge in the future (Huba & Freed, 2000). Shingodjo said: "I was taught how to memorise very well and by then teachers did not really mind, as long as you pass it was just fine." According to Kapandu, memorisation was not a choice, but it was the only option left to survive, otherwise they would have failed and been sent back home. She said:

I only memorised the points to be able to answer any related question ... it was a survival situation and therefore we no more considered our understanding at all. We could even try to memorise the whole textbook, and that is the method of learning that I am good at.

It appeared that memorisation was an obligation, since even examination questions demanded for recitation and reproduction of facts taught. This agreed with what has been documented by Nekhwevha (1999) about education policy in Namibia that at independence the school curriculum, especially for the Blacks, was out of their context and not meeting any of their needs, more focused on examination and not giving them any skills of life to survive. From all the accounts and scripts on how teachers were taught, and their learning, it indicated that it was more of a teacher-centred style. The classroom scenarios reflected and confirmed what has been testified in the literature reviewed that many teachers in Namibian schools were largely and mostly taught through teacher-centred and didactic lecturing, and therefore it was not surprising that many classrooms were dominated by use of traditional approach to teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009) so far.

### **6.2.3 Initial teacher training**

Only two teachers, Etuhole and Shingodjo did not report to have received initial training at the then lone regional institute of higher learning, Ongwediva Training Centre. As also previously declared, teacher training courses available in the 1980s were only meant to train primary school teachers with an entry requirement of the then standard eight. Four of the remaining six teachers, Hamutwe, Iyaloo, Kanona and Kapandu initially trained at Ongwediva, probably earlier than others, reported that they had few Namibian national teachers, whilst the majority were *armed, White South African servicemen*. These teachers recalled a life-time distressing training experience. How they expressed their experiences, thoughts and feelings about their training demonstrated that the “shocking experience” was still fresh in their minds. They expressed as follows:

It was trouble, because our teachers were armed soldiers, they came to teach us in classrooms wearing their uniforms and guns on shoulders...we were afraid of those guns. (Iyaloo)

I do not forget that experience, some of our teachers were soldiers...came fully armed to classes with pistols and ammunitions that include hand-grenades...when we looked at them coming it was like a military attack on school. (Kanona)

Learning was not a matter of comprehending the learning content but was more of parrot memorisation out of fear. Teachers explained how they learned to pass. Kapandu stated: “the conceptual understanding was not there...we simply memorised the words which in many cases did not understand.” Iyaloo confirmed: “...when they come to class, they tell us to take our textbooks and underline what was important...from there you go and memorize, even if you do not understand the meaning.” This indicated the promotion of the Bantu education system that suffocated critical thinking and democratic ideas as it was considered lethal and suicidal to the colonial masters (Harber, 1997).

For Kapandu, the two-year training was an experience of endurance and looking forward to its completion. She even revealed another rather bizarre aspect that could severely obstruct learning, of how such so-called teachers were constantly changing on almost a weekly or fortnight basis. She said:

Except those two [teachers] I have mentioned...the rest were all boers<sup>3</sup>. Those boers were not our permanent teachers. They were members of the South African occupational forces who were changing almost on a weekly basis. You were always hearing that some of them were leaving for the war front, while the new ones were arriving. These soldiers were teaching in their full military uniforms and were coming to classes with guns. We endured that experience and completed such training...

As earlier stated in the educational background chapter, the curriculum at teacher colleges was delivered through the barrel of the gun in those bitter days (Nyambe & Griffiths, 2001). It is also not amazing to hear of such experiences from the teachers because, as asserted by Cohen (1994) and Ralaingita (2008) all teacher programs offered in Namibia before independence were not designed to promote freedom of speech, independent and critical thinking; however, they were rather branded with the feelings of fear, subordination and compliance. Such experiences may possibly hamper teacher experiences to accept and accommodate certain changes in education policy.

Two remaining teachers, Lineekela and Panduleni, entered the institution after the removal of the White South African servicemen teachers. Lineekela asserted that they were taught

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<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>The term Boer is an attribute referring to the White South Africans of Dutch, German and French Huguenot origin who settled in South Africa as early as from 1652. The word is derived from Dutch which literally means “husbandman” or a “farmer” as dictated by their living style of owning and working the farms. They are presently known as Afrikaners. During the colonial and apartheid war, however, the term became more generalised to all the Whites. They are staunch Calvinist protestants who strongly believe that their culture and religion is special than others because they are the chosen nation, blessed and ordained by God to rule the natives like Hebrews.



subject “didactics” or subject teaching methods without content knowledge. She further contended that they were trained by the Philippines and Namibian teachers. On how they were taught she said:

There were no teaching aids such as posters brought to class, only writing on the chalkboard. If for example, we were taught cursive writing, we were taken outside where there was a big writing board so that everyone could write on it and given marks. In other subjects we were only given the summary to study and then wrote a test.

In addition to the didactics she also informed that they were taught on how to organise and administer the school at classroom level, the monitoring and the keeping of class registers. She said: “...on how to complete a register we were given a list of learners’ names and information like how many days each learner was absent and then asked to fill in the details and complete the register on a weekly or fortnightly basis...”

Panduleni elucidated more information on the nature of the course and trainers:

I was initially trained at Ongwediva Training Centre, which was the only college on this part of our world in the late 1980s. The course I undertook was Education Certificate Primary (ECP). It was the only course available after completing Standard 8 by that time. Together with professional courses it was a requirement that we also had to take Standard 10 subjects so that by course completion we had both teaching and standard 10 certificates. We were trained by teachers from Philippines mixed with local teachers who were mostly trained at universities in South Africa like Fort Hare. The medium of instruction was English, but the pronunciation of the Philippines was very difficult to understand, it was confusing.

It appeared that although probably these two teachers did not experience the classroom trauma such as terror and harassment from the White South African gunmen as earlier teachers did, the method of teaching and course curriculum remained the same. It looked that teachers were generally taught about the “how” without the “what” since no subject specialisation was mentioned. It also demonstrated that teachers were trained to teach at primary not secondary level where they were currently teaching which indicated that teachers should have gone through certain upgrading programs that qualified them to teach at that level. Lineekela demonstrated that learning was more of theoretical rather than that of practical nature. This confirmed what Dahlstrom, Swarts, and Zeichner (1999) and Nyambe and Griffiths (2001) stated that teacher programs offered in Namibia before independence were authoritarian, teacher- and content-centred with little teaching practice and not school-based, examination and test-driven. Rote learning and memorisation were important means of

knowledge transmission which was only focusing on the attainment of the qualification despite [learner] teacher understanding and development (Cohen, 1994; Ralaingita, 2008).

Panduleni confirmed what has been annotated in the second chapter that the ECP curriculum gave a heavy load to its students, because he affirmed that along with their professional training, they were also compelled to take Standard 10 academic subjects. This confirmed what was stated by Cohen (1994) and Dahlstrom (1995) that the ECP course was a combination of matriculation and professional subjects. The training and qualifications for the South African cadre to teach was also questioned by teachers. Kanona said: “We did not really know if they were teachers by profession,” and Iyaloo: “I wonder if they were really trained teachers or they were just deployed at schools because of war.” This agreed with the argument made by Cohen (1994) that many teacher trainers, who were mainly White South African army servicemen were inexperienced and unqualified for teacher training. Considering teacher experiences on how they were taught and trained, it appeared that there was a discrepancy between what was demanded by the learner-centred education policy, and the core beliefs and experiences of teachers who were expected to implement it. What teachers considered as truth did not agree with the demands of the policy (Blignaut, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002).

### **6.3 Teacher Understanding of the Learner-Centered Education Policy**

To find out how teachers understood the learner-centered education policy, I asked them how they saw the learner-centered education policy different from the previous education policy. In this theme I present the data on the interpretation made by the teachers on how they understood the learner-centered education policy. The learner-centered education policy was interpreted in terms of its principles such as increased participation and involvement of learners; knowledge construction in relevant and meaningful ways; and the promotion of learner autonomy. The individual sense-making underlined that the understanding of change ideas of policy was remarkably influenced by the cognitive schemas, ideas and expertise of the implementing agents (Spillane et al. 2002).

#### **6.3.1 Increased participation and involvement of learners**

Learner-centered policy was taken for its main change of locating learners at the center of learning. Teachers expressed the shift of roles in classrooms; from teachers to learners playing the center role. This was noticed through the increased participation and involvement

of learners. Kanona and Panduleni stated the role change of teachers and learners in learner-centered education as follows:

Basically, I understand it as the policy where learners play the central role in their education and do something themselves. A learner is given a hint about the subject matter after which she/he has to explore and articulate things her/himself. (Kanona)

Learner-centered education policy ... is a policy whereby a learner is playing a major role when it comes to learning. The teacher sometimes is just there as a facilitator of the teaching-learning process while learners themselves play a major role. They are doing the practice, they explore... (Panduleni)

It seemed that the responsibility of learning was placed more on learners' shoulders because learners became main doers and actors other than teachers. The role of teachers was more of facilitating, guiding and directing learners to be able to do things on their own, but not to explain and do everything for them. Unlike the preceding policy, learner-centered education allowed learners to take full responsibility of their own learning because they had to do much such as exploring and articulating things on their own. The change from being passive listeners to active participants was expressed as follows:

I see learner-centered and teacher-centered education different because, in the old one is only the teacher who is doing everything. It is only one-way communication; learners are only listening when the teacher is doing everything...Learners are no longer listeners only... (Etuhole)

...In learner-centered education learners are active, they do not only sit and listen as in teacher-centered. In teacher-centered education only teachers who were talking while learners were listening. They never brought knowledge or anything they had in the classroom... (Iyaloo)

The expressions above indicated that learners were no longer passive or voiceless; however, they were actively involved and vocal in classrooms. Learners were thus allowed to make their experiences and viewpoints known in classrooms.

### **6.3.2 Construction in relevant and meaningful ways**

Teachers explained that the new learner-centered education advocated the engagement of learners in dialogues to link their prior knowledge to the new learning content. This assisted learners to construct new meaningful knowledge. The following teachers highlighted this idea:

...teachers in the past were the sole source of information. They had to provide, speak and teach everything in class. ... Now a learner could come up with something which

a teacher may not know. Some learners might have seen sites that you as a teacher have not seen, they would inform you about people of a certain area that you have not visited or seen. (Kanona)

The difference is that learner-centered education is for learners...active to do something. For example, when you teach a topic you have to introduce it with a question to see from their answers, what learners know about it. Is not like long ago when teachers come to class and write something on the chalkboard then you copy it down... (Iyaloo)

The expressions indicated teachers doing away with an old concept of viewing themselves as the only source of information because they recognized learners as important source of knowledge; the individuals who came to school with experiences and knowledge from their different backgrounds. Since teachers did not know everything, they thus acknowledged and looked for learners' contribution in class and proved that teachers could also learn from learners.

Teachers observed that the process of communication between teachers and learners was relaxed and supportive unlike in the past when learners had to only accept teachers' ideas. Iyaloo stated: "...they [learners] only accepted what was said by the teacher ...because the teacher was always correct." It seemed that the atmosphere was more relaxed and supportive for learning than before. Etuhole expressed, "...now communication is better because if learners do not understand they can ask, and you as a teacher go to them individually or as a group to talk and discuss the problem." Hamutwe also affirmed saying:

Unlike us during our time, learners now have a role to play in classrooms. They practice; they use devices and are free to ask. There is now interaction in education no one is playing alone. There is a very big difference between learner-centered and teacher-centered education. (Hamutwe)

It looked that there were equal opportunities and chances for both teachers and learners to contribute ideas, and for the learners to be assisted at personal or group capacities. It also entailed assenting or dissenting teachers' ideas or suggestions.

On the other hand, Lineekela presented a different understanding that group work which was prevalent in learner-centred education was not necessarily about the construction of knowledge, but only a copycat platform for many learners. She said:

Learner-centered education is good because it gives the opportunity to learners to learn from each other because there are some learners who learn well from others. But it has a disadvantage when it comes to the awarding of marks. ...The teacher is

expected to prepare and give learners an activity... assess them in groups and record marks. ... Only one learner worked for the marks but the whole group will get the same marks. This causes some learners to proceed to the next grades not knowing anything or achieving minimum basic competencies... until they reach grade 10...Grade 10 examination has nothing to do with learner-centered, the learner needs to have own knowledge. But if you give individual work where everyone feels accountable or responsible you find that everyone tries to get own marks, even low. ...No silence or order in the classroom, too much movements, noise, arguments and debates for what is right or wrong. I don't see any good in this learner-centered method! I think is just better to go back to our old way. I don't see its way of approaching learners suitable, it even consumes time. Arranging of chairs, introducing the topic and dividing of materials for activity takes too long...

It appeared that learner-centered education was more about group work, and according to the teacher, group work and learner-centered approach in general were seen as too time-consuming and did not encourage knowledge gain in learners other than copying from each other without understanding. This apparently meant that learner-centered education did not prepare learners well for examinations which demanded for the recalling of ready knowledge and facts from the memory. The teacher marked that the teaching and assessment methods promoted by the learner-centered education did not align with the assessment criteria used in national external high-stakes examinations. She held the mismatch between the teaching approach and assessment methods responsible for learner failure saying: "This examination sends many learners in the streets." The argument held the view that the new policy is responsible for the increasing number of school dropouts because it pushes many learners out of the formal schooling system prematurely into the streets. This finding seems to support what the literature revealed regarding the contradiction that lied between the teaching and assessment approach and what the high-stake examinations demanded from the learners. While the approach emphasized on understanding, the high-stakes examinations demanded learners to reproduce knowledge of the learning content, the ability that marked for the demoted, discouraged, old-fashion skill of memorization (Horn, 2009; Schweisfurth, 2011). Besides, it was the results of these examinations that dictated whether a learner should continue with formal schooling or not, otherwise they had to go to informal schooling mode to upgrade their points to be re-admitted back to the formal system again. Besides, group work strategy underlined in learner-centered was marked down for its tendency of not instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability in learners unlike the individual work. Teacher belief about effective teaching demonstrated that direct teaching and memorization

were predominant because their actual experiences of examinations demanded for replicating of knowledge.

Spillane et al. (2002) asserted that the basic nature of cognition dictated that new policy idea would be understood in the light of what was known. The mental schemas which are: prior knowledge, experiences and beliefs of an implementing agent provide a lens that shape how the detected information should be processed, programmed, structured and thus understood. Looking at personal learning background of the teacher that was more on memorization; and the nature of external examinations she has observed over the years set for grade 10 learners which demanded more of the remembering of memorized facts (Horn, 2009; Schweisfurth, 2011; Tabulawa, 2013), would cause the teacher to take sides with the traditional approach that directly supported memorization.

### **6.3.3 Promotion of learner autonomy**

Learner autonomy referred to freedom to creative and critical thinking, and the process of making decisions and choices of what they believed was relevant and working for them in future. Teachers highlighted that the new education policy was promoting learners to engage in mental operations that facilitated their creative and critical thinking. Two teachers brought this experience to light.

Looking at how I was taught in school I realized that I was deprived of that right to think on my own and decide of what is good or bad for myself, provide reasons, or to criticize or being critic. That is why, you can go there in the field or job market, yes of course, you have a paper [qualification] but knowledge and skills are lacking [laughs]. But ...you can see that change is needed because we need to integrate theory with practice. (Shingodjo)

In teacher-centered you were just sitting and listening, even if you want to say something or you see something wrong that you may want to criticize the teacher, you can't do that. You were only there to understand what was being taught and deliver it no matter it is true or not. Now in learner-centered education, learners are now forced to be creative because they have to do things for themselves, they find their own ways to be able to get jobs one day. They have to practice themselves to find own answers through their own voice, so this looks very much better than ours. (Hamutwe)

Two teachers above acknowledged that it was necessary to develop learners' creative and critical thinking because it would assist them to make decisions and choices, and to acquire sophisticated knowledge and skills required in job practice. Spillane et al. (2002) asserted that

teacher knowledge and expertise to understand the policy was a result of individual experiences and learning.

#### **6.4 Beliefs, Views and Expectations of Teachers about Teaching and Learning**

According to Spillane et al., (2002), implementing agents construct intuitive models that encode their biases, expectations and explanations about how people think and learn. They strongly control how the reforms are interpreted. New ideas of policy are interpreted according to the implementers' present frame of positioning, through their views on discipline, students, and ideas regarding effective teaching. This topic attempts to present the data indicating that despite the same basic education and training teachers received, teachers are still different because of individual beliefs, views and expectations they hold about teaching and learning which influence their interpretations of policy. Individuality refers to personal views and beliefs, cultural and historical backgrounds as well as professional learning opportunities and assistance specific teachers received in team activities in different subject departments despite the same training they went through. It is about what individual teachers hold and anticipate for the success of teaching, learning and school; and what they perceive counting for effective teaching and learning. This information is important because it assists in understanding the extent of expectations and predict the gap that can possibly exist between the two namely: teacher beliefs and new practices they are expected to implement. The bigger the gap, the less the possibility of effective implementation because, "beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organise and define tasks and problems, and are strong predictors of behaviour" (Pajares, 1992, p. 311).

The learner-centered education policy was established on the philosophical underpinnings which perceive a learner as an active, autonomous, social and curious individual who should be engaged in mutual, cooperative, creative and meaningful learning ways (MBEC, 1993; NIED, 2003). Teachers expressed their views and expectations for successful implementation in terms of effective teaching and learning, as well as what they think characterised good school and schooling regarding interactions and resources available. Themes that emerged were: teacher beliefs and views about effective teaching and schooling; beliefs and views about effective learning and conditions; and parental role for effective learning.

#### **6.4.1 Teacher beliefs and views about effective teaching**

Spillane et al., (2002) argued that implementing agents interpret policy ideas in line with their existing practices, beliefs and knowledge. Thus, beliefs and expectations held by implementers are critical in sense-making because they strongly influence and guide the interpretations and understandings. Understanding teacher beliefs and expectations provide insights on their ways of acting and behaving, because the way people think, feel and perceive the world is greatly influenced by what they believe in, how they feel and what they know (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). The following are the beliefs, views and expectations held by teachers regarding effective teachers, effective teaching and conditions for its enhancement; good school and good schooling.

Teachers characterised the concepts in terms of what they held should be done to ensure effective teaching for effective implementation of the learner-centered education policy. They defined in line with how they viewed and prioritised events in the sense of their actual teaching. The notion of an effective teacher was defined in terms of qualities and roles that distinguished them from others. Teachers stated their beliefs and expectations of effective teachers in different ways. For Etuhole, “an effective teacher should be hardworking, initiative, friendly to learners, and treats them the same way.” Panduleni said, “A teacher must be friendly...a role model to learners, with good classroom management and leadership...punctual and cooperate with other colleagues to work and plan together because we believe in team work.” And Lineekela added, “An effective teacher has to dress in a formal manner...active, moving around monitoring the class...loving and friendly to learners.” The main emphasis was put on the teacher as a role model, a good exemplary for learners in terms of behaviour and dignity in the way they appeared and presented themselves to learners. The other features highlighted had to do with interpersonal relationships with colleagues and learners which involved friendliness, team work, fairness and equal treatment of learners, and good management and leadership.

The same teachers: Etuhole, Lineekela and Panduleni linked effective teaching to assessable outcomes achieved after the lesson taught. Etuhole stated, “Effective teaching is when you teach your lesson and reach the objectives you wanted to achieve...” Lineekela said, “...After teaching or during the course of teaching a teacher needs to evaluate by asking questions, or by giving an activity or homework to see whether the lesson was well grasped.” And Panduleni added, “Effective teaching is when ... you see the results, the good



performance of learners.” The understandings above implied that the effectiveness and success of teaching was determined by the performance or achievement of learners in class or school. The better learners were able to answer the questions based on the lesson taught in tests or examinations, the effective the teaching was. Inability to answer questions based on the topic taught indicated that teaching was not effective and remedial teaching was needed. Lineekela explained further saying, “Effective teaching involves thorough preparation and introduction well linked to what learners already know...it must be contextual-based.” And Panduleni added, “Effective teaching takes place if...teachers are qualified and prepare lessons well... interpret the syllabus well ...not to teach the textbook but the syllabus.”

Teachers highlighted the prerequisite of individual factors which contributed to teaching success such as teacher expertise, skills and ability to interpret the syllabus and prepare lessons thoroughly and having a goal and action plan to achieve the objectives of the lesson. They also included teacher capability to apply the learner-centered principle of relevance and meaningfulness of the learning content. They saw effective teaching as an act of relating the new knowledge to learners’ needs and what they already knew for easy understanding (Brandes & Ginnis, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002).

However, an explanation given by Etuhole that an effective teacher was about the “...use of different methods of teaching to consider the individuality of learners” corresponded with the learner-centered principle of taking the personal uniqueness of learners into consideration. Personal uniqueness included qualities such as abilities, talents, learning paces and styles, and stages of development. Iyaloo asserted: “Effective teaching includes cooperation, team work and ownership of learners and school.” She understood effective teaching in the light of the learner-centered principle of quality and supportive relations provided by teachers to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership in learners that enabled them to be in charge of their own learning.

The conditions for effective teaching were seen as involving both individual and contextual factors. Panduleni mentioned teacher knowledge and expertise as a critical condition for effective teaching saying, “The teacher must have a lesson plan and know the subject content, the methodology and activities to give learners.” However, some teachers believed school conditions as also useful for teaching. Etuhole understood conditions for effective teaching as determined by “the number of learners in class, enough air and space, and the nature of the classroom whether the posters on the walls were inviting and attractive.” Iyaloo and

Panduleni believed the teaching condition was facilitated by the availability and adequacy of resources such as teaching materials and learning aids.

Good schools were described by teachers in the light of learner performance, physical facilities and resources they have available. Etuhole stated, “A good school is which its learners perform well; and has conducive buildings for learning.” In the same vein Panduleni declared:

The good school is well-equipped with human resources...enough teachers and workers...and other resources like buildings. It must have enough classrooms and offices, sanitation facilities like toilets and clean water...a protection fence to ensure protection. My school is average, because it is equipped with qualified teachers at this level, junior secondary. We have equipment like photocopiers to duplicate papers.

However, Iyaloo and Lineekela defined good schools according to the relationships and interactions that existed among teachers, and performance of learners in high-stake external examinations.

A good school has cooperation and teachers who know their aims and a sense of responsibility... Our school performance level has been increasing at least by 5% annually over three years. We have even received a lot of trophies. (Iyaloo)

A good school is when teachers collaborate and cooperate, when there is teamwork to assist each other. There are many female teachers at my school...in cases some do not talk to each other which is not a good example for learners. (Lineekela)

The data highlighted that teachers believed and expected the schools to be supplied and supported with buildings, infrastructure, other facilities and resources to facilitate and make teaching and learning effective. They also believed that cooperation and team work among teachers likely improved learner and school performance and helped teachers and learners to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Good schooling or education was defined in terms of what was happening in classrooms and schools in general on a daily basis. According to Panduleni, good schooling was, “when there is minimum absenteeism of teachers and learners. Etuhole however, added that good schooling was, “when teachers and learners come to school on time and enjoy what they are doing.” Lineekela explicitly detailed the same saying:

It is about both teachers and learners going to school on time and attending to lessons in classrooms there. Going to school every day on time and nothing is being done is not to me good schooling. You may find teachers and learners going to school on

time, a school cleaned very well by its cleaners, but teachers are just sitting in the staffroom not attending to learners. They just go to class and tell learners to take their books and look on a certain page and order some learners to write a summary on the chalkboard for their classmates. Then they go and sit down to chat with their colleagues there. It is also about knocking off on time, not early or too much late. It is about doing your work at school.

The data indicated teachers related good schooling to school and class attendance, punctuality and doing the work in class. As Lineekela emphasized, good schooling was not just mere presence at school as a teacher and not interacting with learners, it was neither about entrusting clever learners to write summaries on writing boards for their classmates. However, it was about teacher interaction with learners in classrooms, it was about effective and maximum use of time in class and at school doing ones' work and duties. It was about showing interest, benefitting from and enjoying what was being done. According to Spillane et al., (2002) mental models constructed by people allow them to predict what would happen in particular events or how someone would react to different kinds of behaviour in specific situations. Such intuitive models encoded their biases, expectations and explanations about how people think and learn. Teachers also interpreted new ideas based on their current frames of references and through their views and expectations of how effective teaching, effective teachers, good schools and good schooling should happen.

#### **6.4.2 Teacher beliefs and views about effective learning**

Learning in learner-centered education was perceived as a supportive, mutual, innovative and meaningful process happening both individually and collaboratively (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003). Individual learning took place cognitively when new knowledge was related to existing beliefs and knowledge through mental processes (Spillane et al., 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2003; Kwakman, 2003). The process involved interrelation of new knowledge to what was previously known and re-adjustment of the existing knowledge. Teaching in learner-centered education should be planned in such a way that it created opportunities that enhanced learners' ability to think and build new learning content into what they previously know. Collaborative learning occurred socially and was distributed or shared with others through active participation in situated communities and contexts. Learners in groups learned from each other through mutual interactions. Learner-centered education acknowledged learners' existing experiences and knowledge and considered them as useful possessions that could facilitate learning. Learners use their experiences to assimilate new

knowledge that is, to add and modify their previous understandings into new understanding (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003; Spillane et al., 2002).

Teachers held beliefs and expectations about effective learning and the effective environment thereof. They defined it in own ways according to their mental models (Spillane et al., 2002). They collectively saw it as a process whereby learners acquire new knowledge and skills as Kanona said: “Learning is when learners obtain new knowledge and skills. It can take many different forms such as studying, experience and through teaching.”

Teachers also argued about how they determined whether learning was taking place in their classrooms and expressed it in common ways of doing it through asking oral or written questions at the end of the lessons whereby learners’ answers indicated by their ability to answer the questions successfully. However, Kanona alleged that learning could be detected from the way learners answered the questions posed to them by the teacher and from the way they asked questions. It implied that the questions learners asked teachers to clarify things could also inform about their level of learning and understanding. She further asserted that learners’ inability to question during and after the lesson presentation indicated two things. It was either a learner fully understood the lesson, which she said was very rare, or that they did not understand at all. The later, she said, meant that the teacher needed to change her teaching style to approach learners from a different angle. Iyaloo explained explicitly how she ensured learning in her class.

Before the lesson presentation I introduce the basic competencies or lesson objectives they are expected to know at the end of the lesson. I write them on the chalkboard. The answers given by learners to the questions asked during the lesson presentation based on the lesson objectives indicate if learning is taking place or not. If not, then immediately I change the teaching method to help them learn. The problem with oral questions is that they do not give all learners the opportunity because of time. Questioning during the lesson course helps the teacher to identify learners who need special assistance. (Iyaloo)

It appeared that questioning was used as a strategy to diagnose the level of learning achieved by learners during and after the lesson delivery.

Teachers related the learning content to the effectiveness of learning. With some specific references, they stated as follows:

The bible teaching is taught with some religions which learners never heard of before. So, learners do not take the bible learning as something important, because it is taught with some things they do not know. (Lineekela)

...when it comes to issues of faith learners are made to learn other things, instead of concentrating on their own religion. I am now talking of these different religions and all those kinds of things that do not apply to them. (Panduleni)

It is not easy to teach learners what they have never met before. It needs to be a part on which they can build own understanding (Hamutwe)

Learning is positive when what is learned is constructive, but can also be negative when what is learned is destructive. (Kanona)

The data highlighted an important aspect of relevance and meaningfulness of the learning content underscored by the learner-centred education (Brandes & Ginnis 2001; NIED, 2003; MBEC, 1993). Teachers established that learning became more valid and interesting when new knowledge was applicable in the contexts of learners and could be easily linked and related to what they already know. They emphasised the importance of the contextual knowledge as a pre-condition for learning. The data presented indicated teacher beliefs supporting effective teaching and learning organised around direct and purposive instruction which emphasised the storing of facts in memory as ready knowledge (Horn, 2009). They also stressed the importance of direct teaching in class and the testing of ready knowledge memorised by learners during instruction. The understanding of teachers appeared to be more aligned with the traditional mode of teaching that was opposed by the learner-centered teaching policy which advocated for natural ways of learning such as observing, experiencing and doing (Horn, 2009). Moreover, the actual situations at schools seemed to contradict the effective teaching as highlighted by teachers. Therefore, what was believed and expected by teachers was not matching with the reality at schools.

#### **6.4.3 Parental and community involvement as condition for effective learning**

Spillane et al., (2002) stated that the stimuli are processed, encoded, organized and thus interpreted in the light of hidden beliefs and expectations held by implementing agents concerning how the world should work and other people should behave in specific situations. In this case it referred to teachers' tacit viewpoints and expectations they held regarding the roles and responsibilities of parents in the education of their children. Some beliefs and expectations held by teachers regarding effective conditions for teaching and learning were the involvement and participation of parents and community in education. Teachers expected parents as well as knowledgeable and experienced individuals in communities to provide communal wisdom to be used as a pillar of reference in the growth and development of young children.

They perceived parental education from home as basic and fundamental. Shingodjo stated:

My parents were my teachers...they taught us respect and obedience of elders to trust and obey the ten commandments of God. Anything not related to Christianity was not acceptable and deserved punishment. We were not allowed to communicate with wrong people, and doing it meant trouble from parents. We should adhere to what they said otherwise we would not eat and suffer from hunger.

On the similar note Iyaloo expressed that:

Education starts at home. Parents at home need to teach their children some basics like how to greet people such as elders and sit down properly...All these are learned from home, when they come to school, we just add.

The two quotes indicated religious and cultural beliefs held by teachers that made them to expect meeting learners at school with some already basic knowledge and behaviors acquired from home. Teacher beliefs and expectations of parental and community involvement originated from the candid, traditional African practice of educating and disciplining the young ones by parents as they deemed fit in their contexts. According to Tabulawa (2013), some practices believed by teachers such as punishment of children have been seen as authoritarian and oppressive by neo-colonial policies. They contradicted the learner-centered goals of access and democracy. The goal of access aimed to remove or reduce the intimidations, limitations and barriers that impeded learning and attending school. Punishment was considered as a limitation to learning (MBEC, 1993). The background belief that education started at home made teachers to develop expectations of meeting learners with accepted basic norms and behaviors as they were already educated and instilled in them by parents from home. Any contradiction to this would evoke the feelings of frustrations due to unmet expectations. This agreed with the notion stated by Spillane et al., (2002) that personal beliefs including religious and cultural values and morals stored in memories over the period of years shaped implementing agents' understanding and interpretation to a great extent.

In stating the conditions, they considered necessary for effective teaching, teachers gave another understanding that parents and school communities should be involved. They believed that the participation of parents and communities in education and school activities was very critical. They stressed the importance of the relationships between teachers and parents in the education process. Iyaloo stated: "The learning environment is controlled by the teachers, parents and learners... without one, nothing can be done." Panduleni acknowledged that, "Teachers and parents must work together." Similarly, Etuhole affirmed:

The relationship between teachers and learners and the community environment has to be conducive. Learners need to have their basic needs satisfied by parents so that they can learn very well... for example; a hungry child cannot perform well.

Parents were expected to perform their roles and duties of caring and supplying all the needs of learners such as food to ensure quality concentration, participation and learning in class. However, it was not only the parents that were expected to participate in schooled activities, but all members of the communities, particularly community leaders. Etuhole and Panduleni emphasized this saying:

The community can make learning environment conducive for learners by minimizing the level of noise when learners are being taught or during examination times. Community leaders can assist by making sure that entertainment businesses are some distance away from the school environments. (Etuhole)

Community members, especially traditional leaders...have to play a major role in the education of children by making sure that there are no she-beens or cuca shops nearby the school environment...because there are noises coming from there which hinder the learning environment of learners, and after school they pass by those places and find themselves consuming alcohol. (Panduleni)

Panduleni used a “three-legged pot” mind picture to demonstrate his understanding of what would make a learning environment effective of which the three legs represented the teacher, the learner and the parents and communities. The quotes demonstrated that it was the duty of the communities to ensure that learners were protected from disturbances such as noise and alcohol consumption which impacted on their mental processes in a negative way as they tend to obstruct the ability to concentrate on school work. Not only did those parents not fulfill their basic roles and responsibilities at home, but it also appeared that they did not realize the power and rights they had as stakeholders in the education of their children. Pendapala argued:

The understanding of our people is not yet at the level to realize that they need to do something such as demanding for the resources of their children because they just keep silent and pretend things are running smoothly while they observe that children have no books and other things. When kids fail at the end of the year, they are the first to blame the teachers. Parents do not do their part well to assist and join teachers to demand for the resources, and also to assist their children in learning where they can. Their participation is totally minimal. (Pendapala, School C)

The quote indicated that the understanding level of many parents was low, resulting in them not noticing or seeing the school or teaching needs and to stand up and join hands with teachers to make demands from the ministry. The main finding highlighted in the quote of

parents' low understanding was found by Hamunyela (2008) that highlighted the importance of parental and community participation for meaningful education. In the same vein Vavrus, Thomas & Bartlett (2011) also found that productive interaction between teachers and parents was one of the efficient conditions for quality teaching.

According to the UNESCO review, the learner-centered education adopted in many African countries including Namibia underscored the inculcation of indigenous knowledge and skills as well as the African ways of rearing children to reduce the odd disparities and gaps that could lie between European and African learner-centeredness. Indigenous knowledge included contextual accepted norms such as appropriate behaviour and respect, and power relations and authority between adults and children and between males and females. The idea of "unity in diversity" (UNESCO-IBE, 2006/7, p.7) was hence adopted with the purpose of strengthening and improving the cultural diversity within different social contexts. This posed a challenge to the implementing agents to maintain the balance between modernization and globalization and local contextualization.

## **6.5 Tensions between Teacher Beliefs and Values, and the Demands of Learner-Centered Education**

According to Spillane et al. (2002), humans tend to construct intuitive models that predetermine their expectations and explanations of how people think and learn because; understanding of new messages involves both recognition and possession of knowledge to assist the ability to understand. New ideas of policy are thus, interpreted in line with the implementing agents' current frames of references and through their views on discipline, students, and ideas about what teaching meant to them. The mental action involves the processes of restructuring and reorganization of existing knowledge as well as an element of protection and maintenance of current structures instead of a complete change thereof. It is considered humane for the implementers to pay more attention to popular and familiar policy ideas in the previous practice than to the new and modern ideas as they infrequently connect and explain unfamiliar ideas. This impedes effective change because it causes them to pay less attention to and consequently overlook new change ideas.

In this theme, the responses of teachers about learner-centered curriculum ideas they felt challenging and threatening their fundamental beliefs and values are presented. The gap between what was known and what was new created tension and influenced the kind of



emotions developed by teachers to perceive the importance of change to either accept or resist. It also included the understanding and beliefs of teachers regarding their expectations of what was good and how things should be done. The data reflected teachers reasoning using cultural beliefs and norms as well as the emotions they are going through in the execution of these new innovations.

Change ideas categorised as challenging and threatening the beliefs, values and norms of teachers included repeal of corporal punishment, learners' freedom of speech, pregnancy policy, learner-centered teaching and assessment approach, and the teaching of sensitive topics. However, these change ideas did not only challenge teachers as individuals, but also extended to other education stakeholders such as parents beyond school community contexts because they impacted on some accepted fundamental cultural norms, values and morals as well.

### **6.5.1 Repeal of corporal punishment**

Teachers experienced that the elimination of the apartheid system has come along with the repeal of the corporal punishment that prevailed in schools. This change fell under the goal of access and democracy which advocated for the removal of barriers that impeded effective schooling for all Namibian children (Legal Assistance Centre, 2010; Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The "huge change" as termed by Kanona, was observed by many teachers as a critical factor worsening the management and operation of education at schools by the day. Six of eight narrative participants namely Etuhole, Panduleni, Iyaloo, Hamutwe, Kanona and Lineekela stated that learner behaviour was under control in the pre-independence era and attributed the escalating learner misbehavior to the removal of punitive discipline from schools since independence. Panduleni stated:

Corporal punishment was abolished after independence, according to the constitution... These days after independence learners are relaxed and it is causing them to behave badly... Before independence the behaviour of learners was under control and learners were behaving well...I assume that it could be because of corporal punishment that was used before independence.

In the same vein Kanona said:

I have now been in the profession for quite a long time since those days we referred to as South African times...learners were well disciplined and dedicated to their school work. If you gave them any task, they all would commit to and do it as they were told.

The two extracts gave an understanding that learners or young people would only behave well when corporal punishment was applied on them. It also implied that young people, including teachers in their early days, were only well-behaving out of fear of punishment by teachers and parents. Teachers compared the behaviour of learners they taught before and after independence, where the earlier were found to be good because learners were disciplined and controllable. Teachers praised their former learners for good conducts as Hamutwe expressed:

During colonial era corporal punishment was practiced at schools... The teacher had the right to report you to your parents, and your parent would come to school and beat you in front of the whole class which was a very big embarrassment...Learners are out of hand now, they dodge lessons and give rude answers to teachers anyhow because they know that no corporal punishment is applied to them any longer.

It appeared that there was a good communication and cooperation between teachers and parents before independence. Parental discipline at home extended to schools as they were also fully participating and involved at school. This practice seemed to instil fear and a sense of responsibility in learners regarding their behaviour outside home because it made them to understand that whatever they were doing at school was properly monitored and their parents would know about it. In support of Hamutwe, Lineekela stated: “Because learners are no longer ‘touched’ I see them undermining our power and authority as teachers very much.” The two teachers understood that the repeal of corporal punishment from schools was the reason behind the escalation of learner misbehavior in schools. This finding concurred with Smith and Amushigamo (2016) that teachers considered corporal punishment as a symbol of their authority and control, and removal thereof made them feel no longer powerless and vulnerable.

#### ***6.5.1.1 Corporal discipline was an accepted norm***

According to the experiences of teachers, corporal disciplinary norm was not only practiced at school, but also home (Smith & Amushigamo, 2016). Shingodjo indicated that disobediences at home were not ending in pleasing experiences on his side. He said: “We had to adhere ...otherwise we would be beaten or deprived of food and suffer from hunger.” In the same vein Kapandu asserted: “Disobediences could be corrected with flogs.” Panduleni amusingly referred it to “spanks” that they had to get from their parents when they came home late. Etuhole confirmed: “Most of our learners are now undisciplined because corporal punishment has been removed” and Iyaloo stated that it was never intended to cause harm

saying: “corporal punishment did not mean to kill learners, but it was the way to inform them that what they were doing was wrong, we were just disciplining them.” It appeared from data that corporal punishment was a widely acceptable disciplinary measure used at any negative consequence. Teachers came from the cultural and religious background where the phrase by Samuel Butler, “spare the rod and spoil your child” (Legal Assistance Centre, 2010) was held high. Corporal punishment was seen as the correct way of disciplining the young children and thus, they accepted that behavioural problems were mostly the result due to its removal. The belief of seeing corporal punishment as just a form of discipline was obtained from teachers’ historical backgrounds such as families and communities. And, as their history indicated, these teachers were the products of the apartheid legacy.

Two teachers, Lineekela and Panduleni, attributed the good-behaviour of learners in the past to strong religious teachings which included inculcating the sense of respect and the ill-behaviour to the absence thereof. Lineekela said, “We were taught the Bible in schools” and Kanona added, “Sometimes I feel that the present absence of biblical teaching in schools contributes to this ill-discipline among the learners.” Panduleni further alluded that unlike learners of nowadays, it was unlikely to see learners in those days standing or walking outside when the bell rung as they had to run quickly to classes because they had a sense of respect instilled in them from their home and school backgrounds. These ideas showed teachers argued that things were good as they were, while at the same time blaming the new thoughts as the causing factor of the negative behaviour experienced at that moment (Spillane et al., 2002). It seemed that before independence the teaching situations and learner conducts were predominated by the strong religious and cultural fundamental principles; and teaching was influenced by wide social conditions such as religious and cultural norms accepted in the contexts of school communities. After independence, the education became westernized and democratized, resulting in many cultural customs and norms shattered and replaced by liberal democracy, critical and emancipating convictions (Tabulawa, 2003).

Culture is dynamic and is gradually changing. The process of change for many accepted cultural beliefs, norms and practices including corporal discipline would take longer to change particularly in rural areas where they were fundamentally grounded. The pace of change in teachers would also not be the same; whereas it would be faster and slower in individuals according to cultural orientation. While some teachers moved fast in believing that child upbringing did not only involve beatings and intimidation; some appeared to have been stuck in the cultural belief and practice that corporal discipline was the only solution to

bring up a child properly. The statements made by teachers indicated that little was done by the system to prepare them to handle such cultural-grounded changes. Alternative disciplinary measures (Smith & Amushigamo, 2016) suggested by the deputy-minister Buddy Wentworth in the early 1990s in the form of booklets titled: “Discipline from within: Alternatives to corporal punishment, Part 1” (April 1992); and “Discipline with care: Alternatives to corporal punishment, Part 2” (August 1993) seemed not to yield effective results. This is because none of the teachers interviewed mentioned about these documents probably because they were forgotten for a long time, if ever known by teachers. This could be possible because, many circular and policy documents were only given and known by principals of whom many at the time were already retired. Many teachers who were at schools were not involved in workshops to fully make them own that change. It also appeared that the guidelines given bounced in a very strong kind of culture and therefore should not be expected to bring change overnight. Spillane et al., (2002) asserted that goals, emotions and biases shaped reasoning about complicated judgments and this made existing practices more resistant to change because of a human tendency to rely more on one’s own experiences than that of experts. Strong motivation of emotions and more reliance on one’s own experiences caused people to pay more attention to information which aligned with the desired outcome and to disregard that which was not aligning with the desired result.

#### ***6.5.1.2 Coping in absence of corporal punishment***

However, some teachers understood that the policy was confusing and contradicting in the sense that it created a conflict of power interest between teachers and learners regarding who had the power over the other. This policy created tensions between the beliefs and values of the teachers and the principles of the learner-centered education regarding the issues of identity because it questioned the role of the teacher in class and what it meant to be a teacher and a learner in the teaching and learning situation.

According to Panduleni, the way corporal punishment was defined as: “...not inflicting any harm to the body of somebody or let not somebody be punished of doing a hard work which cause him/her physical or body what, what... to be harmed...” developed fear and discomfort within teachers. He alarmed that such a definition could be interpreted in different ways, and therefore could be used against teachers. This left teachers with uncertainty and insecurity regarding employment of many disciplinary measures as it was not clear where to draw the line for corporal punishment. Iyaloo expressed:

If you take a stick and beat a learner a little bit parents will come and complain in front of everyone... they report you to the police and you will be taken to jail. We really feel undermined, you are a teacher and you do not have power. There is a restriction caused by the rights. Teachers have the right, learners have the right, it is impossible, and it is a contradiction. Who is who? I am a teacher and they are learners. I think they understand that teachers are there to teach not to beat learners, but they forget that we are also there to discipline learners in a way so that they become responsible adults one day. So, we leave it just like that. Teachers are overpowered by the government... Every learner knows that: "I have the right to go to school, and I have the right not to be beaten by anybody, if you beat me, I am going to report you." Our power is destroyed...

This extract indicated a combination of feelings stemmed from the removal of corporal punishment. Teachers showed the emotions of fear and powerlessness as they were afraid to face challenges from parents, police, and rule of law that would involve court cases in public. Although teachers understood that discipline also came with the teaching package, it appeared that they could not afford to damage their identity reputation and suffer jail arrests over disciplinary issues. So, they opted to 'leave it just like that' to protect themselves from harm. Another emotion highlighted was powerlessness as they knew very well that there was nothing they could do about the policy. This attitude of teachers opting not to reprimand learners because of fear would probably pose a negative effect to the society because it would end up with wayward and unruly citizens. The same opinion was raised up by Kanona:

Bad manners in learners discourages you as teacher to for example, specifically make a follow-up on a certain learner because you are scared of any consequent confrontation and even insults from them which you would not expect from a learner towards his/her teacher. If you make any follow-up with the parents, they would also tell you that such a learner behaves the same way home...some even protect their children. Ultimately, we end up blaming the policy for giving the rights and freedom to people without proper education.

The assertion again indicated teachers afraid to make follow-ups of learner cases. It appeared that trying to do that would make them victims of confrontation and insults. The attitude of parents was also not seen as motivating teachers as some took sides with their children. This parent attitude would portray teachers as intruders who could not mind their own business poking their long noses in other peoples' affairs. The blame was shifted to the system of policy-making for not educating and informing the public. Therefore, teachers only dealt with the removal of corporal punishment by opting to withdraw and keeping to themselves for the sake of their own safety caused by fear, and due to the emotions of powerlessness as they felt ripped off their rights and authority. As Lasky (2005) asserted, anxious or fearful situations

such as threats could develop a sense of vulnerability in teachers as the situation became no longer safe but threatening and making teachers more scared because it made them watch their steps in anything they had to say or do regarding the discipline of learners. It seemed that anything they had to do or say to learners could be used against them in the court of law. Although she felt her teacher pride of superiority over the learners ripped off by the new policy, she also indicated though not explicitly, that she tried other alternative disciplinary measures to curb learner misbehavior. This is in line with what Gao (2008) said that the fading of cultural traditions equals to security forfeit of teachers' professional identity and authority. In the same vein Schweisfurth (2011) highlighted that cultural diversities and problems of power and agency are among factors that hamper the effective implementation of learner-centered education.

### **6.5.2 Learners' freedom of speech and expression**

Teachers observed that the application of the principle of active participation and involvement of learners in the teaching and learning process, as well as the endowment of freedom of speech and expression with learners has made them lose respect for their teachers. This was portrayed through disrespectful conducts such as criticizing, challenging and rejecting teacher ideas as they found them to be old and useless. This affected the life and work of teachers in negative ways as it made classroom management difficult and evoked negative emotions within teachers.

#### ***6.5.2.1 Learners undermine teacher power and prestige***

Teachers observed their power and prestige undermined by learners in different ways. One way detected learners undermined power and authority of teachers was through insensitive remarks they could make to teachers. Kapandu expressed: "Learners have become too disobedient and disrespectful to elders...insensitive and could easily go beyond the limits because of the freedom that is bestowed upon them." The idea was confirmed by Iyaloo saying:

They can talk, which is not similar to the way we were brought up. If you say this, they say "No, what you are talking is the past, not the present. You are old mama, too old! That one is the old culture, you like that old culture. No, we never accept it.

This would make teachers feel their knowledge invalid, irrelevant and old-fashioned. Teachers again found their authority undermined and disregarded by learners as some

learners in classrooms became reluctant to follow and abide to teachers' instructions. Three teachers marked this disrespectful behaviour. Etuhole stated:

This is caused by the misunderstanding of this right of freedom, they think that they have more freedom and they want to enjoy it by being undisciplined. As teachers we find our power and prestige being undermined by the learners because you may tell a learner to say something but he or she is just stubborn and ignorant not willing to respond to your question. You may tell a learner to stand up but he or she says: "No, I don't want to stand up" and may talk about his or her right...right...right, it is my right!

Shingodjo made the same remark saying:

Democracy can be problematic if taken for granted by people who are not ready or prepared for it. As a teacher, you see that your authority is undermined. You find learners disturb, bully others or just leave the class going outside. If you say come back, the learner tells you: 'No, it is my right! I have to go and come back. If I do not want to be in your class I can get out.' You can see that such a learner does not want to be under teacher's authority. Their behaviour is not good, because they think they have freedom to do whatever they want, good or bad. They think it is their right, while at the same time a teacher is expected to deliver; otherwise he is requested to explain why such a learner has failed.

The two teachers shifted the blame from the policy to the unpreparedness of learners, which one would suggest were policymakers or the entire propagating system responsible for information dissemination for not preparing and educating the public including young people regarding the limits of their rights. Teachers held that learners literally understood their rights as behaving the way they wanted. However, despite the 'so-called' rights of learners, teachers raised the concern of accountability of learners' performance. Teachers identified ignorance, misunderstanding and failure to acknowledge the boundaries of each other's rights as the main sources of learners' misbehaving. The same learner attitude was confirmed by Lineekela:

You ask a question and point a learner to respond, but the learner is just staring at you not saying anything. You don't know whether he is staring at you because of not understanding the question or just not willing to answer; he is just silent. You just take it as a mere contempt (odino) in that child.

The freedom of speech in classrooms raised a great concern in because it challenged the issue of power between teachers and learners. As much as teachers said they put more effort to accommodate the learner-centred approach, many still believed that the new approach was giving more rights and freedom to learners, causing them to mistreat and put teachers in

vulnerable and humiliating positions. This would make teachers develop negative emotions that would result in negative effects in the teaching-learning process. It appeared that learners did not fully understand the extent and the limits regarding their rights and that of the teachers. In the similar vein again, Panduleni perceived learners not willing to listen, regard, respect ideas and advise from teachers by relying more on misleading outside and strange sources of information than that of their teachers. He said:

There are times when teachers feel undermined by learners and it is not a pleasant experience... it makes us feel very bad because kids see us as not knowing what life is all about. You observe that some learners totally disregard your knowledge and experiences as a teacher. They do not want to listen; may be this is also determined by financial statuses... some learners have contempt that you are nobody because you do not have expensive assets. Some learners practice things prematurely making them think and consider themselves as adults..., knowledgeable and do not see the need to listen. They do not trust what we tell them regarding sex issues, they trust what they get from outside sources.

The quote seemed to show the sad and envious feelings of the teacher because the “outside others” appeared to have more influence that was harmful on what he considered as “their own.” Panduleni was disappointed by learners’ tendency to trust and rely on outside sources of information that in most cases were misleading; while at the same time, ignoring and disregarding teachers advises and ideas as outdated or useless. Furthermore, learners did not only disregard teachers’ ideas, but also undermined their parents and cultural norms and values. Two teachers observed this behaviour. Kanona expressed:

... Learners also undermine the authority of their parents at home because they think that they know better. Parents report saying: “children say that we are illiterate and we know nothing.” They are now comparing what they learn at school with what is at home. This time human rights and freedom are encouraged and each learner feels it. That has changed the social and cultural context, resulting in difficult upbringing of children, because it causes tension between children and their parents.

In the same vein Kapandu explained:

Comparing our obedience to the elders, learner freedom has presently taken them too far... You had to wait for an adult to have the first say rather you making the first suggestions... you could not interfere in what the elders did or said. Civilization has come with negative things and the children are taking it for granted. I wish and always strive to introduce them to our past ways of children upbringing.

The two extracts marked that the policy of learner-centred education and its freedom of speech did not only create problems between teachers and learners, but also caused domestic



conflicts between children and their parents. It has affected the social and cultural contexts in communities as well. This proved the opinion stated by Vavrus, Thomas and Bartlett (2011) that as much as the critical thinking ability was swiftly progressing in learners, and the fast the process of democratisation was recuperating in schools; so, as teachers, parents, school heads and political leaders perceived challenges and threats (pp.50-51). They felt challenged because the accepted cultural beliefs, norms and expectations dictated young ones not to challenge or contradict the seniors. Young people were obliged to accord respect and obedience to senior and experienced people.

#### ***6.5.2.2 Teachers' coping ways with learners' freedom of speech***

Teachers dealt with the learners' freedom of speech in many ways. Although many teachers did not actually reveal their first encounter with the learner-centred education policy, the few who shared their views revealed that it was not easy to accept new things and abandon what they used to do after many years. Taking into consideration his own educational background and the new strategy he was expected to employ, Shingodjo confessed that changing from one understanding to another was indeed a struggle:

“We were trained at the university to apply the learner-centred approach, but remember that we taught before independence and we were used to teacher-centred. Anyway, we just had to familiarize ourselves with the policy although it was not really easy. I can still remember there was a time when I shouted at a learner. He was asking me too many questions then I said: No, you have to listen to the teacher, I am the teacher. Why should you ask so many questions? Some of your questions are not even related [laughing] to the topic of the day. I silenced that learner.

As Spillane et al. (2002) stated, the process of change highly involved extensive human cost because teachers experienced feelings of discomfort due to embarrassment and humiliating conditions they had to face from their subordinates, the learners. This is because, despite knowledge and skills it required, it also involved emotions such as fear, loss, uneasiness and some degree of struggle. It demanded teachers to modify their mode of thinking, ideas and beliefs at both personal and social levels. Therefore, it was not unheard-of that teachers reported shouting and intimidating learners in self-defense for the sake of maintaining their power and authority in classrooms. This also confirmed the emotional aspect involved in the teaching activity (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2004). The response by Shingodjo above was supported by some teachers interviewed in focus groups. Fyeenaye explained that the problem with change, lied in the beliefs held by teachers. She said:

During the colonial era, as we were taught, learners were not active and were not asking or disagreeing with their teachers. Now you find teachers debating with their learners, which may not be appreciated by teachers, especially the senior ones who still hold the understanding that learners are just supposed to listen to their teachers in class.

Apart from the historical background of the Namibian missionary and colonial education that trained people to be docile and obedient (Harber, 1997; Ralaingita, 2008), the socio-cultural background of all teachers participated in this study was established on the principle that young people were not in any way allowed to question their elders. According to Oshiwambo cultural beliefs and norms, questioning and challenging orders and instructions by your elders signified disrespect and improper rearing by your parents. This indicated the complexity of the paradigm shift regarding the learner-centered education policy particularly in the rural Namibian teaching contexts (Thompson, 2013; Nashidengo, 2013). This is in line with the ‘complexity of cognition’ concept stated by Spillane et al. (2002) that social changes pressing for more complex cognitive conversions that is, demanding for the reorganization of the existing schema and required more effort from the teachers, hardly got a positive outcome from the implementers. Fundamental beliefs like respecting the orders of seniors are categorized as authoritarian in the eyes of liberal democracy and apparently could be some of the cultural norms targeted for elimination (Tabulawa, 2003).

The process of disciplining unruly learners was one of the most effective negative costs detected in terms of teachers’ time, energy and goal attainment. Teachers asserted similar sentiments as above complaining that learners were reluctant to listen; the practice that was perceived as a distrust and disrespect of teachers. As a school board member, Etuhole found the act of dealing with misconduct cases for learners and employees was too time-consuming and did not leave them with enough time for their teaching duties. He said:

...undisciplined learners give us tough times because they do not listen to us ... they will not make you achieve what you want to achieve...Dealing with and disciplining them take up most of our teaching time.

In the same vein Kanona stated:

...learner misbehavior makes our work very difficult ... It is one of the factors that cause low performance in schools.

The data suggested that learner misbehavior in classrooms does not only impede the achievement of lesson goals and objectives, but also hindered maximum time and energy meant to be capitalized on planned task because it obstructed the teaching process. According

to Sutton and Wheatley (2003), feelings of frustration and anger seemed to be caused mainly by factors that encumbered teachers to reaching their lesson objectives and goals for example, the abuse of classroom rules due to learner misbehavior.

The experiences highlighted some elements of teacher stress and frustration caused by the belief that the underperformance of learners was caused by factors that could be controlled such as inability to concentrate effectively and idleness (Sutton, 2005; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). It again confirmed what Tabulawa (2003) stated that the process of democratization in periphery countries aimed to break the existing authoritarian practices in communities and schools and change the ways of thinking even at the expense of their valuable cultures, norms and traditions. As indicated by Shingodjo, proper information regarding the underlying philosophies and goals of the learner-centered education were not well articulated for clear understanding, the flaw that could lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions. Furthermore, this could affect the working life of teachers because it made the teaching process complicated and difficult due to inconsistent and contradicting methods and objectives regarding discipline. While teachers, as underscored by Iyaloo, were trying to develop “responsible citizens,” the democratization policy was aiming to produce insensitive individuals who were politically and economically minded for the competitive capitalism and political pluralism world (Tabulawa, 2013). It was on this background that Vavrus et al. (2013) argued that learner-centered pedagogy could be “localized” due to circumstances surrounding the cultural, economic, and political contexts in which it is implemented. Schweisfurth (2011, p. 425) cautioned for “divergent cultures” which might cause a conflict between the policy approach and the local understandings of issues such as obedience and concerns of power relations. All these supported that no policy could be implemented uniformly in different contexts. Therefore, like other policies, learner-centered pedagogy was also contextual-oriented, underscoring the careful consideration of the contextual conditions for applicability where it was applied because it could not suit all the contexts (Tabulawa, 2003, 2013; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). Therefore, teachers responded the way they did because of their different historical and cultural backgrounds (Spillane et al., 2002) that upheld obedience, compliance and respect for elders and saw challenging or rejecting elders’ orders as disrespectful and disobedience.

### 6.5.3 Learner pregnancy policy

According to Spillane et al., (2002), the mental processing of knowledge includes the protection and maintenance of existing structures rather than its thorough transformation. This implies that policy implementers tend to disregard new and modern ideas in favour of popular and familiar policy ideas predominant in the previous practice.

#### 6.5.3.1 *“Not a good picture, not a good example”*

Eleven of the total seventeen teachers that participated in this study, especially males, expressed their discomfort and uneasiness to accommodate pregnant learners. Hamutwe clearly asserted that he actually did not like the new policy, but he had to conform. He said: “We don’t like some changes such as pregnancy policy that came in because they are contrary to our traditional understandings.” And Etuhole stated:

I think it is not a good picture to other learners. Honestly, I do not feel comfortable because a learner may give birth in class and I am not a nurse or a doctor. I am afraid to become a nurse or a midwife all the sudden while I am teaching.

In the same vein Panduleni expressed:

In old days when a learner became pregnant, she had to leave school, according to our cultural norm, that learner was prohibited to attend school because it was not a good example for others. But these days it is not the case the learner can continue schooling though she is pregnant.

The extracts indicated teachers feeling threatened and intimidated by the presence of pregnant learners in classrooms. As Panduleni underlined, keeping pregnant girls and learner-parents away from school was not only the cultural tradition, but also a school policy. The quotes also indicated negative cultural beliefs and unpleasant emotions such as fear and discomfort attached to pregnancy policy. The fear stemmed from their identities as teachers and as men who were never prepared in any way to attend to child birth cases. Teachers also feared for the negative influence for other learners by pregnant or learner-parents as they understood that their interaction with them would make them follow suit.

Literature indicated this deeply-rooted traditional negative perception amongst the Ovawambo in Namibia of girls who became pregnant before traditional initiation as they were considered a disgrace and a taboo that caused misfortunes in their families and entire community (Loeb, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2007, p.7; Yamakawa, 2007 p.70). This conception was still held by many individuals despite Christian persuasions. Besides,

teachers were afraid of handling the sudden and unfamiliar childbirth cases they knew nothing of in their working environments as childbirth was a scary process believed to be attended by mature and experienced midwives in communities, whereby men were not involved. As Spillane et al. (2002) expressed, feelings and beliefs grounded on fundamental beliefs, experiences and historical-cultural backgrounds were likely difficult to change because they demanded for the restructuring of mental schemas. As data indicated, it appeared that the presence of pregnant learners was not wholeheartedly accepted by teachers. This showed elements of gender and cultural understanding emanated from hegemonic masculinity, because it included some forms of prejudice and discrimination of girl-learners based on gender and negative perceptions attached to their involvement in pre-marital sex and giving birth to children out of wedlock (NIED, 2003). It also contradicted the gender equity access of all learners to education.

#### ***6.5.3.2 “There is nothing teachers can do, we have no power”***

On how they were coping, it seemed that although it was associated with negative perceptions, teachers gave in and taught pregnant girls. Fyeenaye admitted: “...there is nothing teachers can do; it is their [learners] right.” Hamutwe also agreed: “...we have no power over them we only try to accommodate them.” This corroborated with the idea that some emotional pain and discomfort such as anxiety, powerlessness and defencelessness suffered by the teachers put them in a vulnerable position because they could neither change nor reject the policy but only to conform to what was against their beliefs and understandings (Kelchtermans, 1996; 2005; Lasky, 2005).

In addition to the emotions of fear, teachers also expressed frustration and dissatisfaction due to challenges caused by the policy. Panduleni felt that the learner pregnancy policy promoted the problem instead of minimising it. They understood that there were no challenges as learners were given all the rights to do all they wanted. He said: “...this policy causes a lot of problems as it encourages girls to get pregnant more...it looks as if girls are now competing with one another.” He further complained that learners resumed classes too soon after delivery even after two weeks. The same complaint was echoed by two teachers. Fyeenaye said: “...when their terms are due, they go to deliver their babies and come back even after two weeks, brought by their mothers who offer to take care of their grandchildren.” Kanona also testified saying: “...a learner goes for delivery only for few weeks and all of the sudden you see her back in class.” According to the Oshiwambo cultural norm, the woman who just

gave birth and her new-born baby must remain indoors for a specific period of time. Therefore, it was unusual for the learner-mothers to just go back to class immediately after they delivered. Another disappointment highlighted was that parents were also promoting instead of discouraging the sexual behaviour of their children because it appeared that they were making things very easy for them. Learners were rather supported than being challenged to be responsible for their actions.

Teachers expressed their beliefs of what they thought and expected from the parents. They blame and hold parents and some school communities responsible for bad influence amongst learners. Two teachers, Fyeenaye and Penelao, who came from combined schools revealed the alarming rate of pregnancy cases which involved school girls as young as primary level age falling victim to pregnancy. Fyeenaye expressed: "...many of our girls, even the very young ones at primary level, become pregnant and it appears that no one worries or sees the problem." It seemed that many parents did not see pregnancy as a problem for school-going girls any longer; because there was policy protecting and allowing them to continue schooling. Similarly, the alarming rate of learner pregnancy and the age of learners involved made Penelao to question the kind of care and guidance parents gave to their young daughters.

This year we had many young girls in primary grades who got pregnant...it made us to question the care of parents... if the parent is constantly and consistently guiding and advising it is possible that the child refrains and stays away from those things.

The new ideas of policy appeared to be way too different and strange because they were too demanding and challenging making it difficult for the teachers to incorporate them into their existing schemas because they disagree with their implicit beliefs and representations. This testifies to the complexities of the paradigm shift as some policies were not in line with teachers' personal and cultural beliefs and therefore were not fit for implementation in some teaching contexts (Thompson, 2013). Fyeenaye and Penelao used what Spillane et al. (2002) termed as "hot cognition" or motivated reasoning as they associated their sense-making to question the morals and values of parents, as well as their care and guidance in that regard. This indicated teachers' attempts to protect and maintain the existing systems because they integrated the reform ideas into the communal practice (Spillane et al., 2002). The opinions given above confirmed the responses made by teachers and principals in the research study conducted by Kapenda (2012) that the policy was more encouraging than discouraging teenagers to become pregnant because it did not pose any challenge or give conditions that

discouraged sexual activeness among learners. All the challenge and burdens were shifted to teachers and parents instead and left learners free and more irresponsible.

Yet again, the problem of learner pregnancy was interpreted in line with the socio-economic context of learners. Kafita reasoned that some girls who were heading their households became victims of teenage pregnancy because of poverty and lack of parental care as there was no one to look after them. Those factors made young girls the victims as older men took advantage of them in the name of money which they found irresistible for their own survival and that of their younger siblings. According to Panduleni, high absenteeism and dropouts were more apparent with learner-mothers. He said:

Learner-parents may come to resume schooling without proper arrangements made at home on who has to take care of the baby while they are away. We have experienced a high absenteeism and dropout of such learners resulting from problems of sick babies suffering from malnutrition or even deaths due to improper care. The mother may drop from school to mourn or take care of her baby of which some do not come back again.

Kafita confirmed the assertion above saying that “pregnancy causes a problem of high dropout of school girls, where you find 7 to 9 girls dropped per term because of pregnancy.” It appeared that the policy posed a challenge to the normal school activities and the schooling process because it greatly contributed to the problems of high absenteeism, increase of learner misbehaviour, and high school dropouts.

Furthermore, the re-entry of pregnant and learner-parents was associated with the escalation of learner misbehaviour in classrooms which was reported hindering and disrupting teaching, and demeaning teacher authority as learners equated themselves to teachers as adults. In addition to parents’ little or lack of guidance and advice; high learner pregnancy was also attributed to the policy of human rights and freedom of expression that was not clearly explained and demarcated in school contexts, and probably to the misunderstanding that was visibly outspoken in most community members. This was expressed by Panduleni that learners accepted and took their rights for granted because they wanted to enjoy while at the same time, they forgot their responsibilities as learners. He said: “This policy made children to no longer differentiate between their rights and responsibilities; they see everything as their right, making them to forget their responsibilities.” In the same line, Iyaloo saw learners as unable to differentiate between the good and the bad. Pendapala however, attributed it to the human nature of willing to emulate others and the strong influence in their school

community. Panduleni suggested the need to revisit and revise this policy of learner pregnancy in schools, for certain adjustments to be made because he perceived it as doing more damage than mending things.

From the responses above it appeared that teachers were dissatisfied and discontented with the new policy approach. Considering the individual, cultural and contextual reasons stipulated by the teachers it seemed that the policy would result in ineffective outcome. Ineffective outcome in this context referred to the failing possibilities of the policy due to teachers' pessimistic attitude which would discourage pregnant girls to return to school. The findings of this study regarding re-entry policy confirmed the rationale of the learner pregnancy policy of minimising problems associated with learner pregnancy such as school dropouts, illegal abortions, baby dumping and infanticide due to poverty and motive to continue schooling (MoE, 2007, LPP p.7). However, as Newman (1998, p.10) asserts, dealing with opposing ideologies is one of the critical problems that create tension in teaching.

#### **6.5.4 Sensitive learning topics**

Teachers interpreted new change ideas with the use of personal emotions and cultural aspects such as norms, values and morals as supportive tools for their reasoning. These factors were used to maintain and protect the traditional cultural practices teacher still considered the best; and to intentionally or unintentionally mark down or reject new change (Spillane et al., 2002). At certain points teachers blamed the new curriculum policy and changes that came along with it as the major cause of the deteriorating conditions and poor performance. Two teachers identified that certain topics in the syllabi were contradicting with both personal beliefs and cultural norms. Therefore, they experienced the feelings of uneasiness and discomfort to teach such topics to young children. Hamutwe reported:

My subject syllabus covers all the significant issues, but sometimes it is difficult to deliver because, in our culture many learners at their young age, are prohibited to talk some things in deeper and explicit ways. Like in our culture, someone is not allowed to talk about sexual issues in public or at a certain level of his/her age. Some learners get surprised when they hear us talking about sexual things in classrooms, they think we are crazy.

This quote indicated that the teacher was constrained by his identity, which was determined by his age and position as a teacher, to discuss sex-related issues with learners who were considered too young for that. This would damage his reputation as an adult because it gave a



negative impression to learners. Kanona held that learners were taught explicit information too early. She said:

A learner in grade 8 for example, is already told not to have many sexual partners. This strange information is not easily digested by a learner of that age. It simply awakes their curiosity for the first time, after which they start asking questions. One question could be: 'So I am now allowed to have one sexual partner?'...if you think on the other side, sexual matters in our societies are hardly discussed in public unlike in the so-called developed Western societies. Therefore, we always have the feeling that our children are exposed to strange cultural things.

The assertion indicated tension experienced regarding the age and level at which certain sensitive topics were introduced to learners. This was caused by the concern about the curiosity which was basically engrossed in the human nature, because the teacher understood that some topics were prompting young children to think, ask and at the same time stimulate their sexual feelings prematurely and consequently get involved in sexual activities earlier than their normal time (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). The same teachers explained how they handled situations of such nature. Kanona said:

Look at me, at my age but you expect me for example, to demonstrate how to put on a condom to small kids that I am trying to teach to refrain from sexual activities at their age. I am a member of our community board and a Church elder as well. We are the custodians of our culture and it is our responsibility to promote and teach our kids acceptable norms and moral values of our culture. What will people say about me? They respect me so much. I find it very difficult to teach those topics... I rather call one of 'those' teachers with no moral values to do it.

The different sub-identities, positions and roles played by teachers in their communities determined the mile they could go to implement the policy. Some positions and roles played in social, religious and cultural contexts could hinder the implementation of policy because they would contradict each other, made it difficult for them to play double standards. Hamutwe stated:

...there are many sensitive topics in Life Skills. For example, these things of homosexuality, abortions and condom use. You teach learners, they go home to tell their parents that our Life Skills teacher taught us this and this. People start to gossip out there and rumours will be all over...against you. You will be ridiculed and called all sorts of names. Sometimes I skip those lessons or just teach superficial details without giving all the deep ones.

Like Kanona, Hamutwe was also concerned about the reputation of his own identity towards learners and the community at large. Teachers responded in that way because what was demanded by the policy was not in line with their personal and cultural beliefs and expectations. It also indicated how the affective costs to self-image work against policy implementation as teachers try to protect their identity and self image to others (Spillane et al., 2002). As Weick et al. (2005) asserted, who teachers think they are influences how they perform which determines their image to others outside and how they treat them. This is because identity is a social construction; depending on how others perceive teachers, and this has the potential to stabilise or destabilise their identity. According to Zembylas (2004), emotion is lived, experienced, expressed, and felt consciously by people, located within the values of families, school and community cultural contexts. This implied that emotions are shaped and influenced by the cultures and social conditions of the individuals; and it is therefore a socio-cultural construct. It was not surprising for the teachers to make their sense grounded on their individual, cultural and contextual beliefs, values and morals (Spillane et al., 2002).

## **6.6 Tensions between General Principles and Specific Examples in the Representations of Policy**

Spillane et al. (2002), found that there is another factor that has been infrequently discussed in traditional accounts, yet, it plays a major role in human cognition regarding policy implementation. It has to do with the external representations which are used by policymakers to deliver their proposals for changing behaviour. These interpretations are said to contain incomplete descriptions of social reality, because they only tend to reflect selections made by individuals who create them about what must be included or excluded, and the kind of problems to be targeted. Still, the full meaning of external interpretations take place only when individual judgements and activities of agents are established on what has been actively interpreted and created once they interact with the messages. The cognitive perspective is appropriate when it comes to analyse how external representations by policy makers enable or constrain the agents' sense making. It was again revealed that what make policies different from each other is their external representations, the leading approach used to demonstrate the reform ideas, which involves a sequence of brief, regularly one-sentence statements given as goals or objectives.

This theme presents the data indicating that there is tension lying between the general principles and the specific examples of the policy. The tension is expressed in terms of whether the content of what is taught is found relevant and consistent with existing beliefs of teachers or biased towards a specific context.

### **6.6.1 Discontinuity of learning content**

The continuity of the learning content in some subjects was detected to show “knowledge gap between the grades” which made the transition and continuity of knowledge difficult for learners as they progressed from one grade to the next. This flaw was observed in Natural sciences. Lineekela stated as follows:

Learners find some topics in grade 8 totally new and difficult. For example, in Natural Science grade 7 syllabus topics are not clearly specified because natural Science is a combination of Physical science and Life science at primary level. It then becomes difficult for the teacher to bring learners at the level because there is something they skipped there; learners also find it difficult to understand because the topics do not link from grade 7 to grade 8. There is a gap especially between grade 7 and grade 8 topics... (Lineekela)

As indicated in the statement, the issue of “knowledge gap” made teaching more challenging as it pressed teachers to make extra efforts of providing background information to the learners so that they could catch up with the work effectively.

### **6.6.2 Content representations are biased and not contextual**

Despite the learning content found relevant and useful by many teachers, some teachers observed that some topics were biased towards urban contexts. Many examples and activities used were advantaging learners in urban areas and discriminating against rural learners. The change in Physical Science content was remarked by Etuhole as follows:

The syllabus has covered most of the topics which should be taught in the subject. However, most of the activities used are more related to kids who are in urban areas. That is why most of our learners in the rural areas find many topics irrelevant, and do not enjoy the subject as a result. What I think is that the subject must also include topics that are relevant to the learners in rural areas. Most topics and examples used are one-sided; they do not consider all the contexts of the Namibian children.

It seemed that the subject content was at standard level of learners targeted, but the problem lied in the way the examples and activities were used for communication (Spillane et al., 2002). This implied that some topics, examples and activities given did not reflect the social

reality of diverse Namibian contexts. The teacher felt that the subject content was irrelevant and therefore not interesting to teachers and learners in rural contexts because it did not match to their daily situations and experiences. Although the teacher did not explicitly state it out, teaching an unknown or out-of-context topic was not easy because it required the teacher to link the new ideas to what was previously known by the learners. Hamutwe made a remark on this issue:

... [The syllabus] should link to community science. It is not easy to teach a learner about something they never met before. It needs to be a part on which they built own conscience. It is not easy for the teacher to teach learners what they do not know, let me say an airplane. The syllabus should focus on the community knowledge that link the subject to the things of the outside world; I mean the subject content should be context-based.

It seemed that teaching an unknown or out-of-context topic was demanding and challenging for teachers as they required more creativity and innovation on how to stimulate and link learners' existing knowledge to the new subject matter while they were faced by lack and shortage of teaching resources. However, the sense-making theory posited that new ideas of policy needed to be incorporated in a system of practices by using peoples' existing schemata as power to base new ideas (Spillane et al., 2002). Thus, need to cater for all Namibian contexts was underlined and called for so that no classroom would feel left out.

### **6.6.3 Crowded curricula versus allocated time**

Teachers found that their subject curricula were too congested, made it difficult for them to finish within the time allocated. They also indicated the coping strategies they employed to manage the situation.

#### ***6.6.3.1 Teaching facts for examination***

The content adjustment of some subjects was said to cover too many topics, and made teachers to feel overloaded with a lot of work due to crowded curriculum. Two teachers of Oshikwanyama raised this concern. Kandina asserted:

...to be specific, the Oshikwanyama syllabus is too long not like English, and this means that there are too many topics to be taught one after the other. Different language components are too detailed and compacted, enough to stand on their own as different subjects. There is literature, reading and comprehension, and many others causing us to be overloaded with a lot of work

In the same vein Kapandu expressed:

Our syllabus is very long, once the exam gets closer and you did not cover the syllabus then you are trapped to find an alternative way out. You may borrow the periods from the teachers who have covered their syllabi or use the periods for the colleagues who are absent. Afternoon study time is also another time one can use to catch up. We also use Saturdays as well as some days during school holidays. You must sacrifice some of your free time and that of learners to be able to reach the end target... I find myself obliged to teach facts for examination purpose. I prepare and give learners the hints as to how examinations are set and give them the kind of questions that are likely to be asked, as well as how they can answer them. I do that when I realize that there is no more time for me to teach in a normal way. I give them direct hints like, 'if this is asked, you should answer this way.'

The two quotes indicated that the Oshikwanyama syllabus was too long and compacted unlike other language syllabi. As confirmed by the data above, long syllabi made it difficult for the teachers to cover all the topics in good time before examination. However, due to pressing reasons such as accountability and desire for recognition; the guilt feelings teachers tended to experience in cases of learner failure and avoiding blame, they would end up sacrificing much of their private time to catch up with long syllabi. Another alternative opted by teachers was the teaching and preparing learners for examination facts other than teaching for understanding as underlined by the learner-centered education. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) highlighted that tiredness and pressure due to tension and overwork could intensify emotions of anger and frustration. Teacher statements also arouse the question as to whether they had a platform at subject level such as meetings and workshops to air their views and discuss about the syllabi and content (Spillane et al., 2002) to inform the decisions about the subject.

#### **6.6.3.2 “I teach the syllabus”**

Teachers explained how they caught up with their syllabi on time to ensure that learners were taught and prepared for the examinations. Some teachers arranged for extra classes. Kandina said:

...Sometimes it forces us to arrange for afternoon classes whereby we take up learners' time to study in the afternoons...teach during weekends or during the holidays, particularly August holiday. We give learners only one week for break and we use another week for teaching so that we can catch up and cover the syllabus well.

On the similar note Penelao expressed:

Languages usually have long syllabi. To complete the grade 10 syllabus for example, I try different ways...I have to use the study time during weekdays as well as some

Saturdays. Lastly if I cannot make it, I just combine them altogether and just teach non-stop even up to five in the afternoon. I know that doing like that is less effective but I only do it in order to complete the syllabus. However, it is better than nothing because at least some learners will pick up something which may be asked in examination.

The two teachers above indicated that they arranged for extra classes. Another coping way highlighted by Kapandu was borrowing periods from the colleagues who were done with their syllabi or using the periods of the absent colleagues. As evident from the assertions above, the behaviour and actions of teachers were determined by the interpretations they made; which, in turn, were influenced by their personal, school and socio-cultural conditions (Spillane et al., 2002; Tabulawa, 2013). For example, an alternative strategy of teaching after school, on Saturdays or on holidays was only made possible by the advantage provided by the rural contexts where almost all learners walked to schools, and no transport arrangements from schools involving parents were necessary. This strategy would be difficult for the teachers in urban area contexts where learners had fixed transport arrangements to and from schools.

The physical contexts of some schools could create major mental concern for teachers on how and whether they would manage to complete the syllabus on time. Lineekela expressed her concern due to circumstances out of her control:

Mostly our school uses to experience flood during the rainy season, and as a result it closes. By the time the school resumes you are already concerned about time whether you will complete the syllabus before the examination approaches. Or, for other reasons, you realise that you would not finish. This year we have arranged and have drafted a timetable to teach on Saturdays. To avoid our learners not be too much exhausted we decided that only two subjects are taught each Saturday. I hope this will not take too much long, it will soon end.

Some school contexts such as the one above experienced natural problem as determined by their geographical locations and as a result, teachers would find it difficult to finish their syllabi on time. As specified in the statement, the school as a unit arranged for Saturday classes so that teachers could catch up with the time lost during break time. The interpretation of the teacher as well as the action taken by the school was based on the historical and ecological contexts of the school. The efforts for teachers or schools to meet the teaching demands were strongly influenced by the uniqueness of the location and history of the school. Knowing exactly the conditions surrounding the school made them to arrange for Saturday classes (Spillane et al., 2002). The democratic nature of learner-centered approach allowed

for teacher-learner interactions and learner participation in discussions, arguments and critical questioning and teachers were therefore expected to instill such skills and attitudes within learners (National Institute for Educational Development, 2003). However, given the tight time schedule they had to complete the syllabi and prepare learners for high-stake examinations and the increasing demand to improve examination performance for the learners, teachers would find class discussions not amusing or interesting otherwise a waste of their precious time (Horn, 2009; Tabulawa, 2013; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). The hectic combination of crowded syllabi, time pressure to complete the syllabus to improve learner results put teachers in the position to incapacitate and compromise the objectives of learner-centred education intentionally or unintentionally.

However, while some teachers felt challenged by the length of subject syllabi against the time, they had some teachers said that they did not feel challenged by the length of their syllabi because they “teach the syllabus” instead of “teaching the textbooks” prescribed. Etuhole stated:

I do not have a problem to finish my syllabus on time. Teaching this subject for quite a long time has made me not to take too much time to cover the syllabus. My teaching does not really depend too much on the textbook, but on the syllabus. If you depend on the syllabus, teach the basic competences as given, you will cover on time but if you teach the textbook you may end up not covering the syllabus on time.

Similarly, Panduleni stressed:

For preparation, the teacher must interpret the syllabus well so that when he goes to class, he does not teach the textbook but the syllabus. Following the prescribed textbook alone can lead you astray and is a waste of your time, because textbooks can give too much information than necessary, while at the same time can also give too little or nothing at all of what is required by the syllabus.

The data indicated that teachers adopted the “teaching to the objective” (Tabulawa, 2013, p. 156) style for them to cover their syllabi on time. It appeared that teachers had accumulated experience and knowledge over the years in their subjects causing them to develop self-confidence and trust. Teaching the subject for many years made them to know and be able to manipulate the syllabus content as they knew exactly what examination questions were usually covered. For Tabulawa (2013), teaching in such a manner was one way of compromising the learner-centred education in many sub-Saharan countries including Namibia, because its curriculum was taught in behaviourist terms which in fact, was

incompatible with its constructivist ways of teaching. Two teachers from School B appended the idea presented above. Kakuna stated:

...the best way is to stick to teach according to the basic competencies. They are all stipulated there in the syllabus...if you stick to them you will not experience any difficulty of not finishing on time.

And Kafita:

...we follow the syllabus according to the basic competencies. The basic competencies are made in a short form that allows the teacher to finish teaching within a stipulated period of time...

Two teachers above emphasised the adherence to the basic competencies as stipulated in the syllabus. For covering the syllabus and leaving some time to do revision to prepare learners thoroughly for examination, it seemed that teachers planned teaching strictly based on the short form of basic competencies. In other words, there was no room for additional information for deeper understanding of topics taught. Establishing lessons on prescribed textbooks was problematic and a waste of time. Lineekela and Iyaloo confirmed what others asserted above. They cautioned against irrelevant content, too little or much information than necessary at levels targeted and demanded to look for additional information where textbooks could not provide. Knowledge and wisdom for teaching expressed by teachers proved the long-accumulated expertise acquired over a long period of time by experience through trial-and-error, and various workshop attendances.

Like Botswana, the Namibian education system also adopted and valued the learner-centred approach which was based on the constructivist premises with more emphasis placed on the method, communication, cooperation and mutual construction of knowledge; opposing the traditional behavioural norms which promoted the banking education predominant in both missionary and colonial formal education systems. However, the subject syllabi were amended in such a way that they demonstrated significant characteristics that promoted behavioural norms. Some behavioural norms mentioned by Tabulawa (2013) included the atomisation of knowledge, understanding of technical competencies in very narrow terms, tight specification of the content, and the pre-determination of the lesson outcomes in measurable behavioural ways. The behavioural techniques would oblige teachers and learners to employ specific classroom practices such as stressing or teaching for examination facts only which evidently would clash with the learner-centred methods and assessment ways. This also influenced the approach of assessment to be followed because, the more the lesson



objectives became too tight to the subject content, the more the assessment constructions would be tied to it as well. Given that teachers complained greatly about too long and congested syllabi it would express that their probability to exceed syllabus objectives would be very much reduced by the pressure to cover the syllabus on time before the examination.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data which indicated that teachers were individual sense-makers in the process of policy implementation. It supplied the critical elements of data such as teacher experiences beliefs and cultural values during their different life stages from which they draw and relied on as unique individuals to interpret events and phenomena in their own ways. They observed main changes including the shift of roles in classrooms, more learner engagement in discussions, and acknowledgement of their knowledge and experiences, and improvement in classroom communication. Teachers understood and made sense of the learner-centered policy in the light of prior knowledge and experiences, beliefs, views and expectations held regarding teaching and learning. Data revealed that tension existed between teachers' personal and cultural beliefs and values, and some ideas posed by the new education policy. Some new ideas were found challenging and threatening teacher experiences, beliefs and expectations; and thus, made it uncomfortable for the implementing agents to implement and accept the proposed changes. This included amongst others; the repeal of corporal punishment, freedom of speech and expression of learners and learner pregnancy policy.

Different ways that teachers used to handle situations and challenges depended on personal, professional abilities, as well as on given school and community contexts. Teachers' personal selves involved beliefs, dispositions and cultural understandings, while their professional identities were determined by factors such as the extent of professional expertise, development opportunities received and involvement in subject issues at school and other levels. The findings revealed that teachers relied on their past experiences, what they believed as effective; as well as expectations. Data highlighted that teaching as a practice was charged with a variety of emotions. Experiences which were associated with positive emotions influenced teachers' work in a positive way; while those associated with negative feelings likely influenced teachers' work negatively. The next chapter presents teacher sense-making at the contextual level.

## CHAPTER 7

### TEACHERS' CONTEXTUAL SENSE-MAKING OF LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data which argue that teacher interpretation of the curriculum is influenced by the conditions and situations at school and community level; therefore, they are contextual sense-makers. Contextual factors refer to features pertained to school contexts in which teachers work. They vary from macro infrastructure factors such as buildings, electricity and water; through meso- and social factors such as relationships and interactions; to micro-classroom and subject-related factors like sufficient space, teacher-learner ratio, workload, textbooks and other teaching equipment. They greatly influence the way teachers engage with the policy reforms. Table 7.1 gives the summary of how findings in this chapter are presented.

**Table 7.1: Summary of chapter finding presentation (Source: Field data, 2017)**

| Chapter | Research question   | How research questions were answered   | Themes emerged out   |
|---------|---|--|--|
| 7       | <p>1. What are the teachers' experiences of learner centred approach?</p> <p>2. How do teachers engage with and respond to the learner centred approach?</p> <p>3. Why do teachers respond to the changing curriculum policy the way they do?</p> | <p>1. Identify and explain conditions, situations, challenges and demands at contextual level that facilitate or inhibit the effective implementation of the learner-centered policy.</p> <p>2. Examine how teachers dealt with contextual conditions, problems and limitations they encountered to implement new policy reforms.</p> <p>3. Identify the feelings and emotions attached to teacher behaviour and actions and how the contextual y feel their backgrounds challenged, threatened, changed and constrained by the new curriculum.</p> <p>4. Identify the constraining or enabling factors at contextual levels and explain why teachers acted or behaved the way they did in the implementation of the policy reforms.</p> | <p><b><u>Teachers' contextual sense-making of the learner-centered education</u></b></p> <p><b>1. The influence of school contexts on teacher sense-making</b><br/>School infrastructure and facilities<br/>Teaching materials and equipment</p> <p><b>2. The impact of social interactions on teacher reasoning</b><br/>Teacher relationships<br/>Teacher-parent interactions<br/>Role of school communities</p> <p><b>3. The influence of school organizations on teacher interpretation</b><br/>Subject and departmental meetings<br/>Administrative work and other duties<br/>Demands for accountability</p> <p><b>4. The regional and national conditions for professional development</b><br/>Uneven introduction opportunities to the new teaching approach<br/>Cascading workshops</p> |

The dimension of the contextual sense-making highlights that the sense-making process is not a solo matter; it goes beyond an individual understanding extending to the interactive network of performers, objects and situations (Spillane et al., 2002). It underlines that the understanding of teachers of policy, that is learner-centered education is mediated by the contexts or situations in which they live and operate. The data in this chapter is organised based on four themes namely:

- The influence of school contexts on teacher interpretation
- The impact of social interactions on teacher reasoning
- The effect of school organisations on teacher sense-making
- Regional and national conditions for professional development

## **7.2 The Influence of School Teacher Contexts on Sense-Making**

According to Spillane et al. (2002), the social context of the school has the potential to enhance or impede teacher understanding of the learner-centered education policy as well as its implementation. The sense-making and consequently the implementation thereof by teachers differ from context to context depending on broader and multidimensional social contexts of schools; and the variety of identities they construct within as determined by the social, professional, economic, historical, traditional, ethnic, religious and political affiliations. This framework element emphasized that people define and give meaning to the events in the light of how they were socialized and oriented as children, adolescents and adults in their contexts, and according to the role they play in their communities. People develop an exclusive set of experiences, suppositions and expectations as determined by their position in the world.

### **7.2.1 School infrastructure and facilities**

The sense-making theory underlines that the local contexts of implementers act as dominant intervention factors between policy strength and classroom practice. This implies that the strength of policy in influencing teachers to change their practice is determined by their enactment zones. This involves what school contexts could offer to support the implementing agents in understanding that change was necessary. One of the factors that determined the distinction of enactment zones was the conditions of physical facilities and the amount of resource materials teachers have available at local schools. Giving attention to the provision and availability of resources ensured implementing agents that change attempts are in place to help them make sense and implement the new idea (Spillane et al., 2002).

For schools to function effectively, they need infrastructure. Infrastructure refers to the basic setup, structure and the accessibility of services, and it includes buildings, protective fences, access to communication services such as roads, telephone and internet; as well as water and electricity services. Infrastructure plays a very big role in the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Rosenholtz, 1989; Schneider, 2003). In this sub-theme data is presented which indicate how the contexts of schools impacted on the sense-making of teachers.

### ***7.2.1.1 Classroom conditions and overcrowding***

Teachers argued the importance of the school factors for the effective implementation of the curriculum. From the accounts of teachers and personal observation as a researcher, all schools of the interviewed teachers had buildings. Three teachers stated this saying:

Iyaloo: “You now hardly see learners taught under a tree, during the rainy season we are well protected.”

Panduleni: “We do not have sheds here; every learner is taught in a classroom although some classrooms need renovations.”

Penelao: “Now all the learners are accommodated inside the classrooms, no learner is even taught under the sheds, the problem is only the overcrowding.”

These statements indicated that in by and large, many schools had physical buildings. However, one school reported the opposite because some learners were still taught in sheds. Fimana said, “...many of our classrooms are sheds...” Again, it seemed that some schools only had buildings per se, but the present condition of many were dilapidated buildings in need of urgent renovation. This agreed with what Panduleni highlighted above, that though learners were taught in classrooms, still renovation was needed for many classrooms. However, comparing the present to the previous situation, at least teachers acknowledged the efforts made by the current government to improve the situation regarding the infrastructure at schools.

Teachers indicated that the number of classrooms was insufficient and the space they provided was too small to accommodate the number of learners enrolled. This problem was attributed to several factors at both community and policy levels such as the increased number of learners that exceeded the maximum in school as well as classroom capacities which resulted in overcrowding and high learner-teacher ratio. Kanona highlighted this saying: “In our communities, learners have exceeded the ratio because they have to be in school and you cannot exclude any of them.” Teachers indicated explicitly that the deteriorated conditions and overcrowding of classrooms hampered the teaching and learning process in direct ways. The following extracts indicated this.

“It is quite impossible to arrange learners to work in groups...because the class is full ...to capacity. For that reason, I can say learner-centred approach is very rare in our classrooms.” (Lineekela)

...such conditions can sometimes make us resort to teacher-centred because we cannot reach every child at all. We are really struggling. (Iyaloo)

The two teachers indicated clearly that overcrowding and narrow space in classrooms made it difficult to arrange chairs in ways that enabled learner interactions. They also stated that such challenges made them to resort to the traditional ways of teaching. The following teachers reported similar:

...our classes are overcrowded; if the class is overcrowded it will be very much time-consuming and is not easy to control. (Etuhole)

Dividing the class in groups is challenging... because our classes are overcrowded... the space is very narrow to move between the groups and monitor their work. (Kapandu)

You hardly give attention to the slow learners within that period of 45 minutes because the class is too full. In many cases learners are again sharing books say, two or three per book. You will just find yourself in October not even knowing the name of even one learner because they are so many while the time is little. (Shingodjo)

The experiences of teachers above suggested that overcrowding of learners in classrooms did not only obstruct the teaching plan and approach teachers would use, but also intensified the problem of insufficient textbooks and teaching materials. Shingodjo claimed that overcrowding weakened the building of individual teacher-learner relationships, because it made teachers to keep a distance and “remain strangers and outsiders” as time could not let them “get into personal contact” (Kelchtermans, 1996) with all learners. Iyaloo and Kapandu asserted that individual support especially for slow learners and knowing learners’ names (Shingodjo) were limited. Limited movements between the chairs due to lack of space in classrooms forced teachers to resort to traditional techniques of teaching which did not involve extensive movements and much exchange with learners. This problem of overfilled classrooms was described by Thompson (2013) as making the learner-centered education difficult to implement particularly in rural settings. The data seemed to suggest that overcrowding was caused by the inadequacy of classrooms at schools, resulting in allocation of big class groups. As stated by Lineekela above, the arrangement to engage learners in group activities to share and learn from each other became a daydream due to lack of space. Big groups also made classroom control and supervision very difficult to handle and reach every learner for individual assistance as the pedagogy of learner-centeredness demanded for. Classroom overcrowding forced Lineekela to make use of learners to mark their own work. She said:

Overcrowding makes our work such as marking very difficult. That is why sometimes one resorts to self-marking methods to just relieve the situation. The subject policy

compels us to give a certain number of activities to learners in a term. For you to achieve that you give them work to do and when you come the following day you ask them to swap their exercise books and mark the work for each other with pencils as you give the correct answers. They can even mark their own work. (Lineekela)

One teacher however, reported differently on this issue. Hamutwe said, "...our classrooms are not that full to capacity, we can arrange tables and chairs of learners for group work."

This finding of overcrowding due to lack of classrooms was affirmed by many studies (Awe, 2007; Hamunyela, 2008; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011; Ralaingita, 2008) conducted earlier in the Namibian context. It seemed that the learner-centered teaching approach did not match well with the conditions of many schools making it difficult for teachers to implement them. In other words, this problem showed the incompatibility of the learner-centered approach in many Namibian schools especially those in rural areas in terms of infrastructure and human resources to accommodate the big number of learners for successful learner-centered implementation. The infrastructure of many schools was below the standard level and therefore was not suitable for learner-centered education implementation. This made the researcher agree with expressions made by a senior teacher in a rural secondary school in a South African context with the implementation of the outcome-based education policy stating: "OBE is a good policy-but, it's not for us" (Harley & Wedekind, 2004, p. 202). Since the learner-centered education was a good policy, the social conditions and situations in which it had to be applied at schools were not compatible, hence the unpreparedness and unsuitability of school conditions and implementers involved.

In view of the sense-making theory (Spillane et al., 2002), it appeared that teachers were constrained to apply the learner-centered teaching approaches and strategies by a variety of factors related to physical school contexts. The data also suggests that much was not done for the schools that were disadvantaged and under-resourced during apartheid because they were still suffering. This made it difficult for the teachers to implement the learner-centered education policy the way it was anticipated by the policy-makers.

#### ***7.2.1.2 Teaching in makeshift/shed classrooms***

The focus group teachers at School A stated that many of their classrooms were just sheds, made of corrugated iron. After interview sessions, the researcher observed that many classrooms were makeshifts of corrugated iron. It was comforting to observe a building construction underway at the school. The condition and shortage of classrooms at school constrained effective teaching. Fimana, from School A, stated:

...there is no way you keep a poster there, you only have to fold and bring it to the staffroom. I only teach in one class which is properly erected with bricks, the rest are sheds made of corrugated iron. If you leave them there you will find them destroyed by either learners or animals such as goats. This makes the revision bit difficult as learners forget the work because they do not usually look at the picture, it is hard for them to catch up the work done. We have a very shortage of classrooms, very much.

The quote indicated that the school employed a teacher rotation instead of the learner rotation system. This system used at school served as a strong indication that there was a shortage of classrooms because it required enough classrooms for all teachers to implement the learner rotation system. The method used put teachers in a position of moving from one class to another carrying their teaching materials along depending on their daily period schedules. This practice suffocated teacher ability and creativity as relevant information was made inaccessible and unavailable for learning at any time learners entered classrooms, because teachers had to move, roll away and store their posters in a safe space. In that way, learning was disabled and restricted as learners forgot the work and this might affect their performance. The learner rotation system allowed teachers to establish subject-friendly classrooms because they could display posters and other learning materials on the walls to enhance learning. It was therefore, an understandable decision for the teachers to take their teaching aids to the staffroom for safekeeping. From the personal viewpoint of teachers, teacher rotation system and the carrying of teaching materials from one class to another seemed tiresome, time and energy consuming for teachers. From what the teacher said, it seems that classrooms had no lockable doors and schools had no protective fence. If had, there would be certain holes where animals like goats could sneak inside to damage teaching materials.

Kafita from School B described the deteriorated conditions of the classrooms and how they cope with the situation. He said:

Our classrooms are not enough and since we are using a learner-rotation system sometimes you find some teachers wandering around with their learners because the classrooms are not enough. You find them walking around looking for the unoccupied class to use. ...the condition of many classrooms is very bad. They are old with leaking roofs and the walls have big cracks that reptiles can even enter...during rainy season water goes in and you find your papers or books damaged ... some do not have electricity, if you need it you should go to other classes for that service.



Although School B was using the learner rotation system, it was also reported experiencing the shortage of classrooms. The problem of walking around looking for the classroom did not only indicate poor planning from the side of the management and the teachers involved, but it also cut down the teaching time which subsequently affected the way teaching would be done. Cracks in the walls and leaking roofs would pose a health hazard and great danger to the safety for both teachers and learners. Contaminated water, dust and other air pollutants such as reptilian compost would seep into the classrooms through the leaking roofs and cracks. Besides, many Namibian reptiles such as snakes and scorpions in northern Namibia were categorized as those that inflict painful bites to being highly venomous (Marais, 2015; Tracks 4 Africa Blog).

Given the learner-centered education and its demands of creating stimulating and interesting developmental practices appropriate for incidental and natural learning through conducive environments (Horn, 2009), it would therefore be a point of concern whether such school situations as explained above are able to provide an encouraging learning opportunity for the learners. The situation could affect both personal and professional lives of teachers in different ways. Spillane et al. (2002) asserted that how teachers behave and act is situated and directed by the norms, rules and conditions of their school environments. Daily procedures of suffering and conditions of hardships such as moving from one class to another and walking around looking for classrooms would make teachers to understand teaching in negative ways. The conditions and age of school buildings and classrooms were linked to the performance and behaviour of learners whereby it was established that the nature of building had a potential influence on the performance and behaviour of learners. In their larger review of research studies on the relationship between the school buildings, learner achievement and behavior, Earthman and Lemasters (1996) found that learners in new modern buildings demonstrated better attitudes and had fewer behavioral problems than learners in old and dilapidated buildings. According to Ekundayo (2010), unattended and unmaintained physical amenities and conditions in schools such as dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, dirty and dark buildings have discouraging consequences on people including learners and teachers.

#### ***7.2.1.3 Libraries***

Teachers described the nature and the conditions of their school libraries. Amongst all the teachers that participated in this study, only one teacher, Etuhole, pronounced that his school had a library building which was not well equipped. Teachers were asked to explain in

explicit terms what they have available at schools, the conditions and how they make use of the library facilities at their schools. Penelao from School C said, “We have no school library, the library building is the one you see being built there...” while Kakuna from School B stated, “...we have a space to call a library, a room which was previously used as a staffroom. The condition is not good, it is old and there are no built-in shelves...it is not at standard level.” Fimana added:

We do not have a specific library building. What we call and use as a library is just a storeroom where the books are stored. It has a very little space that you cannot even take the whole class for reading or looking for information, unless you divide them in groups.

It was obvious from the statements made that some schools did not have spaces to call libraries, while some schools made attempts to use classrooms, old staff rooms or storerooms for a similar purpose. Another problem was a very limited space to accommodate a big number of learners at a time. When asked how the libraries were supplied and updated, Kakuna responded as follows:

The books in there are few and they do not cover a wide range of variety because we do not get a continuous supply from time to time...they do not satisfy the needs of learners who are willing to study, do their homework or activities because not every topic is covered as most of them are only story books for languages...We are in a dire need of new books. (Kakuna, School B)

It appeared that even schools that claimed to have ‘so-called’ libraries were not well-resourced but had a limited supply of updated and extensive variation of books. Teachers explained how they managed to cope with the situations at schools. Fyeenaye expressed that:

...as teachers we have nowhere to refer our learners to look for information, because we have no library. I wanted to teach my learners in Basic Information Science class on how to look for information in the library; first it was about the library rules and then how to enter and search for particular books. There was nothing to show my learners. Learners need to know how to look for information in the library... There is nothing of such kind at our school, what is needed by learners to learn effectively is not here. If we speak about the actual quality level needed by learners for what we call quality learning seriously we have nothing to take learners at that level.

The problem of unavailability of facilities at schools made some teachers feel left out and not well-attended by the facility and resource providers at policy level. The process of facility and school provision was found to be too slow and discriminating. Again, Fyeenaye remarked:

...we are talking about libraries and laboratories where you find some schools well equipped and supplied with those facilities because they are considered as resource schools where other schools in the region can go for assistance. But in certain regions like ours, none of the schools has those facilities at the standard level. This results in all the schools in the region to suffer the same fate. There is nowhere in our region teachers can take their learners for laboratory practice or library information to gain experience. The process of school support and facility supply is too slow; even if it will come, it will be too late when many children that could be rescued would already be in the streets.

The statement indicated that the imbalances of the past, in certain aspects, were still not yet addressed to ensure the goals of equity and equality for the delivery of quality education were achieved (MEC, 1993). Comparing her region with others, the teacher seemed to feel her region was neglected and not well-focused in terms of education facility, resource provision and supply. The historical and political background of these teachers indicated that they experienced apartheid education, hardships and sufferings during the time of war and struggle. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear teachers making such comments because they had some expectations and dreams regarding education after independence. One would understand that teachers were disappointed as their expectations and dreams were not met the way they anticipated.

According to Spillane et al. (2002), sense-making involved prior knowledge, experiences as well as the element of emotions. And yet again, teacher emotions were deeply imbedded in cognition, and both were interwoven in the intricate reality of teaching (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996). When teachers realised that they reached the limits of their efficacy, that is, when they had no control over the conditions at their workplaces, they likely tended to develop the feelings of frustration, helplessness, disappointment, demotivation and burnout because, despite all the effort invested, they found themselves falling short in making a small difference to improve the situation and thus the performance of their learners. This made them to give up hope and courage in trying new things (Kelchtermans, 1996).

#### **7.2.1.4 Hostels**

Another element of school identity or condition emerged from the data was whether it was a boarding or non-boarding. Etuhole, who was teaching at a day school senior secondary, raised the issue that boarding schools were advantaged and used to be selective. The boarding schools had more privileges over day schools because they received as many application forms from primary school learners who were also in need of hostel accommodation. Such

schools used that privilege to select and admit mainly the best performing and brilliant learners leaving out the slow, dull and poor performing ones who were often over-aged for day-schools. He said that in many cases day schools ended up ‘sweeping’ the streets because they had to take all the ‘leftovers’ who could not be admitted anywhere; mainly comprised of grade 10 failures who went out of the formal schooling system to upgrade their points. Such learners were found to be more undisciplined and difficult to manage because of their advanced age and their long break from the formal schooling system. Etuhole complained about this problem saying:

Most of our learners are scattered in the location and their living conditions are not conducive for learning. Some stay in “oubashus”, some are accommodated in bars living with people who have nothing to do with school. Such living conditions make them to attend school quite late and to be absent many times. Absenteeism is very high. Because they are not living with their parents sometimes, they ran out of food, and they come to school on empty stomachs. I think this affects their learning situation.

This indicated some ways how the availability or unavailability of certain facilities at schools could facilitate or hinder the teaching and learning process. The unavailability of accommodation buildings at schools made learners to be lodged anywhere in the surrounding area where they could be exposed to different situations which were not conducive for learning. The data again suggested that the goal of equity for the learner-centered education was still not achieved because the provision of infrastructure and resources was still below the standard level. As Spillane et al. (2002) stated, the sense-making of teachers on how to carry out their professional duties is shaped by their school differences in terms of kind and quantity of resources available and the support they obtain from their different subject areas and departments (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore, 1995). Therefore, the problem of not receiving support, materials and equipment at the right time could result in numerous inconveniences and difficulties, and subsequently ineffective implementation of what is intended by the policy. In the same vein Schneider (2003), maintained that the availability of facilities such as hostels have a great negative influence on the teaching and learning process due to high absenteeism and learners’ reduced attention and concentration in classrooms. On the other hand, they make it difficult for the teachers to manage learner behaviour and facilitate learning opportunities as expected because much of time and energy were wasted in disciplinary cases. Situations of that nature did not support learners’ mental and physical well-being for improved academic performance and achievement.

### **7.2.1.5 Other basic services**

All teachers that participated in this study testified that their schools were supplied with water and electricity with some even having access to wireless internet, but due to the remoteness of the school areas, most often the network signal was reported to be very poor at a point that teachers could not get the information they needed from internet. Fimana confirmed: “Even if you want to use internet, the network signals are very weak for you to do your work.” While five schools were close to tar roads, two had gravel and five had sandy roads into deep remote areas many kilometers away from tar and gravel roads. For the schools that were situated in pan areas, the situation used to be very difficult to reach the schools during rainy seasons as the *oshanas* (water pans) got full and cars would get stuck in the mud; while schools in remote sandy areas were difficult to access during autumn as cars would get stuck in sand. My experience as a researcher is a testament to this, as my car got stuck in the mud when I went to interview a teacher at one of those schools.

The unavailability of internet services at schools was found to hamper teachers’ work because it restricted their opportunities to explore different sources of information necessary for teaching. In other words, it limited teacher as well as learner knowledge. Once more, though it was not clearly articulated, difficulties to reach schools would result in diminishing teacher morale resulting in never-ending teacher transfers to better schools and finally in the dropout of school performance. According to Schneider (2003), poor school conditions greatly influenced the process of teaching and learning as they affected teacher health and wellbeing. In addition, they increased teachers’ likelihood to leave their schools as they encountered dilapidated school buildings, overcrowding, lack of and insufficiency of science and other teaching equipment daily, which highly increase their dissatisfaction levels.

### **7.2.2 Teaching materials and equipment**

Teaching materials and equipment enhanced learning because they assist teachers to plan, prepare and present the lessons effectively. Teachers also expressed how their schools were supplied with teaching materials and equipment since independence. Panduleni said, “...we have modern equipment for duplicating papers.” Lineekela added:

When we started our teaching career, we were writing on the chalkboards. There were no duplicating machines because schools had no electricity. We had to write everything on the chalkboard even tests. It was impossible to draw pictures for tests because you would not finish. For examinations, we used to write on the stencils with

hard and sharp objects to be duplicated at circuit offices. Now schools have electricity and we are now buying advanced duplicating machines to show pictures...we even get information from internet.

The quotes demonstrated that teachers experienced a gradual change from manual methods of doing things to modern technology, a slight improvement in terms of time and quality of service over the past years. As teachers were exposed to new technology devices, the professional development of teachers was also upgraded at some schools. Kanona said:

New things like information technology have been introduced. When our school got new duplicating machines, those of us who were trained before technological equipment were introduced as to how we operate them.

The experience given by Kanona was grounded on the context of her school. It indicated that the school norm had a resilient strategy of supporting the professional development of its teachers, whereby it ensured that all that teachers were continuously updated with relevant and significant information. As Spillane et al. (2002) put it, school differences and extent of providing opportunities for teachers to deliberate on the implementation process of the reforms ensured successful implementation. What was done by the school to train teachers on equipment operation demonstrated an opportunity for human capital development within the schools' social capital program. These opportunities were said to serve as effective strategies for heightening self-confidence in teachers.

#### **7.2.2.1 Textbooks**

Spillane et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of teacher support to enhance sense-making of change because, how teachers implement or teach in classrooms is determined by the number and type of teaching materials and equipment they have available. Eight teachers expressed satisfaction with the improvement in the manner their schools were supplied with textbooks. However, six indicated unhappiness and dissatisfaction on the matter. From the discipline of Mathematics, Kafita stated that the provision of textbooks and writing materials at schools has improved in recent five years. He affirmed gratefully saying: "We do not have so many problems in Mathematics; at least we have enough textbooks." However, his counterpart, Pendapala from a different school complained about the late delivery of teaching materials and shortage of textbooks.

During colonialism teaching materials such as pencils, writing books, rubbers and rulers were delivered at schools in time. Like now towards the end of the year, you would see trucks coming to schools to deliver the items for the oncoming year...but now, since delivery service tenders are given to some individuals, schools now are

made to wait until March or even April before the materials are delivered. Learners are sharing the textbooks because they are not enough.

The teacher used his past contextual experiences to compare the two educational systems, the previous and the present, regarding how they were providing services and dispatching textbooks to schools. Fimana, an Entrepreneurship teacher, expressed that they had enough textbooks. She said: “we have enough textbooks.” However, she was still in need for recent, updated resource textbooks so that she would not only rely on the prescribed textbooks because, as a teacher she needed to have access to as many reference books as possible. She echoed the same belief with Iyaloo who stressed that the inability for some teachers not to “get reference books” resulted in many learners not “achieving even the minimum basic competencies in some topics because...teachers only followed the available textbooks.” She even urged that teachers in developing Namibia needed to “get information in different ways, here and there, even use internet.” As for Fiyeingepo, only few learners in a certain grade were sharing the textbooks.

Kanona, Kapandu and Penelao came from different schools, yet from the same subject, which was, Oshikwanyama Home Language background. They complained intensely about the shortage of textbooks, reported to only receive a small number of textbooks ranging between 10 and 20 per grade which they had to move from one class to another for sharing. Kanona described the situation as challenging and abnormal, affected her work in a negative way. She said: “...for a class of 35 learners it is very much challenging and abnormal.” Since all teachers from the same subject background were complaining about the insufficiency of textbooks, one could infer that the problem was not school-related but regional- or policy-level related.

Again, it emanated from the data that the imbalances of the past still existed as teachers made it clear that their schools were under-resourced. Teachers indicated the feeling of pain as their schools and learners were left behind in terms of knowledge acquisition and achievement. The data above explained that lack of and insufficiency of school facilities and resources ranging from macro-infrastructure to micro-classroom materials and equipment limited teaching because they made it a difficult task to undertake. In addition, the problem did not only violate the basic rights of learners to education, but also limited their opportunities of being the “preferred kind of people” in a “competitive capitalism, free-market economy and political pluralism” society (Tabulawa, 2003) aimed for by the learner-centered curriculum. Taking into consideration the demands of natural learning which required teachers to expose

learners to authentic learning situations (Horn, 2009), it seemed that even the education system itself was struggling to provide all the necessary requirements for learner-centered teaching in all schools. This made learners especially in under-resourced schools, unable to be exposed to varied learning styles and exploration methods that allowed them to participate successfully in the pluralistic and competitive process towards the knowledge-based economy for Vision 2030.

Teachers stated some strategies they used to *manage* the teaching situations with a shortage of textbooks. The two main strategies stated were the carrying of textbooks from one class to another and making copies for the learners. Home language teachers: Kanona, Kapandu and Penelao echoed a critical shortage of textbooks in their schools and stated how they dealt with the situation. Kapandu stated:

In Oshikwanyama we do not have resources at all. There are no teaching aids, and books are not sufficient for learners to do work by themselves. The number of the learners is big and the books received are very few. Only 10 or 20 books we have to use in all classes. We try to make copies but often photocopiers are not functioning.

In the same vein Kanona explained:

Having only 10 Oshikwanyama text books for instance, for a class of 35 learners is very much challenging and abnormal because you may want to assign work such as reading to learners to do home for the next lesson but there are no books for all of them. At times we make copies, but resources are not always available.

The two teachers indicated two problems regarding textbooks. Firstly, textbooks were not enough for learner use in class that is, one textbook was shared by two or three learners. Secondly, they had to use the same textbooks in different classes, made it difficult to give homework. Teachers stated giving copies to learners, an option which could not be guaranteed due to financial constraints of school development funds. On the other hand, Penelao said:

I am in need of literature or novel books. I usually provide the list of my needs to the management as they tell us to do, but nothing comes up. Sometimes, out of frustration, I complain which is not professional but once I do that I tend to get even 10 textbooks bought with the school development fund. Though not enough, at least they can make even a small difference. I also consult my colleagues at other schools for assistance.

It seemed that the strategy of complaining used by Penelao worked because at least she could get something out of it. All Oshikwanyama teachers stated outright the prevailing problem of



insufficient materials, resources and textbooks. They used the coping strategy of carrying the textbooks from one class to another, making copies for the reading materials when possible, and obtaining assistance from co-teachers at other schools. However, Kandina asserted: “The materials we are using especially in languages are only those we create ourselves.” This was an indication of teacher resourcefulness and creativity to design self-made teaching aids and materials.

The problem of insufficient textbooks was also experienced in other subjects. Pendapala, for Mathematics, stated an alarming textbook-learner ratio of 1:45, which was even impractical to divide the textbooks among learners due to the very limited number of textbooks. The similar problem of textbook shortage was echoed by Fimana in Entrepreneurship. When asked how she is dealing with the problem she said: “I tried to summarise just the main points, make copies and give to my learners. The problem is only when our photocopier is not functioning.” Given the school conditions and other aspects that surrounded the teacher, one would say she tried her level best; although she would only include information that she found relevant for examination and in that way, learners ended up receiving limited information on the subject content.

According to Spillane et al. (2002), the context of the education system and schools could influence the way teachers implement changes in classrooms. This was because implementation depended on the degree of assistance such as teaching resources and facilities provided to the teachers. In order to convince teachers that change was desirable and to reduce resistance, the integrated sense-making model emphasised the need to craft a sense of dissatisfaction from within change implementers, the teachers. This would be made possible through ongoing support and sufficient consideration essential in terms of resources. Failure to do so would influence teachers’ cognitive way of thinking to depreciate the relevancy and need for change, making them find reasons to go back to their familiar ways of doing things.

#### ***7.2.2.2 Laboratory equipment***

Spillane et al. (2002) stated that the way teachers described their struggles was influenced by the social context as provided by the informal professional communities within and out of their schools. They argued that the more the professional relationships and links teachers created with other co-teachers inside and outside of the schools; the more and the better assistance they received, and the better they made different interpretations and felt determined or encouraged to make different efforts on implementation.

Teachers gave their experiences and feelings with regard to laboratory building provision and equipment supply. Kakuna, from Schools B, described his school condition saying:

You may have a laboratory but not all the schools may be fortunate to be supplied with the laboratory materials by the ministry. (Kakuna, School B)

It appeared that some schools had laboratory buildings erected but laboratory materials and equipment were lacking. However, some schools were reported differently:

We have no school library; even the laboratory is not here. (Penelao, School C)

I do not want to say that we do not have enough or we have a shortage when it comes to laboratory facilities; but what I would like to tell you is that when it comes to the provision of quality basic education of the Namibian child, here at our rural schools, there is nothing. (Fyeenaye, School A)

It appeared that libraries and laboratories were not available at many schools in rural areas, and where they were available, they were poorly equipped. Science teachers such as Etuhole, Kakuna and Lineekela described that chemicals and materials needed for practical experiments and activities were insufficient for the number of learners in classes, outdated or expired, and not supplied on a steady basis. Etuhole testified: “We do many things practically when we have enough teaching aids and facilities, but the problem is only that sometimes you need to use them, but they are not available because the number of learners is big.” From the testimony given it appears that the bigger the number of learners taught, the more the laboratory equipment and space required and the more the supply was needed. The same problem was also highlighted by Kakuna that despite the point that their school had a laboratory building, they were not supplied with the laboratory materials by either the ministry or any sponsor. It seemed that schools could do little due to financial constraints to buy the new equipment upon the expiry of what they had.

Teachers reported handling and coping with situations where they had to manage practical lessons without or inadequate materials and equipment. As the subject became more practical than before, Etuhole said that as teachers they were compelled to prepare and do more practical lessons. However, he stated his coping strategy saying:

You can manage the situation by dividing learners in working groups instead of individuals. It is easier to assist learners in groups. But, on the other hand, it is very much time-consuming especially when carrying out experiments in groups with inadequate facilities. If you fail to succeed during the lesson, since you may run out of time, you can use remedial class lessons. Remedial classes after normal classes at

study time, or during weekends on Saturdays can also be used for experiments. That is the way to cope.

The teacher used the method of grouping learners to make use of what was available; and while the method used was time consuming, extra time was arranged for the remaining groups to do the practical work. Nevertheless, Kakuna said:

I consult my colleagues teaching the same subject at neighboring schools. I have a colleague friend at School P, and his school is better-resourced when it comes to supply of materials. So, I go there and borrow materials to come and use here as long as I ensure the safety of those things.

The quote demonstrated the teacher in social relationships with other teachers outside the school for professional assistance. The teacher sought for assistance from teachers at neighbouring schools. As argued by the sense-making framework employed in this study, teacher collaborations and discussions enabled teachers to gain new ideas and knowledge and open them to new improved strategies of teaching which lead to the improvement of learner achievement (Spillane et al., 2002).

### **7.3 The Impact of Social Interactions on Teacher Reasoning**

Spillane et al. (2002) argued that how the implementing agents made sense of and implemented policy was shaped by the patterns of interactions amongst each other; with learners, and school communities. These situations were important as teachers in different settings or groups, formal or informal, often made different interpretations of similar messages. The settings could be categorised according to grade levels, subject levels, teacher age and experience levels or departmental groups. Patterns of formal or informal social interactions in groups such as the degree of familiarization between individuals, type of setting in which the discussions were held, and the nature of power relation between the negotiators determined the degree of extent, openness and comfort for involvement and deliberation in discussions and negotiations. This also shaped the kind of change they noticed and how they noticed it, as well as the way they interpreted and understood it. This theme presents the data about teacher sense-making as influenced by interactions and relationships within their respective schools, parents and communities.

### 7.3.1 Teacher relationships

According to Jenkins (2017), good collegial relationships enhance the teachers to work together for effective curriculum implementation to achieve common curriculum goals, reduce workloads and prevent burnout for teachers. However, poor collegial relationships adversely affect implementation because they develop negative attitudes and low efficacy which result in teachers resisting to change in their classrooms. Teacher relationships in this context refer to how teachers communicate to build and strengthen their working teams at schools. Collegial relations did not only involve learning about teaching and other professional issues; however, it also involved aspects from emotional, psychological, social and financial dimensions. Teachers emphasised that healthy relationships such as collegial support served as a powerful mechanism of learning in different aspects of professional development. Panduleni said, "...we work as a team at school, if you cannot cope with something you go to your colleagues for assistance." Lineekela added, "...with teamwork among teachers there is no way a teacher would go to teach a topic that he does not understand well, because colleagues are there to assist..." Fyeenaye echoed:

I would like to tell you that the support we give and get from each other in our staff exceeds even what our families can offer us...my colleagues are my closest assistants for example, when I am planning for my lessons, they are the immediate people whom I can ask how to go about it...They always respond by making suggestions and giving advice.

It seemed that teachers relied eminently on collegial support as two other teachers stressed on this. Fiyeingepo explained, "I use to approach a certain teacher who teaches the same subject to guide how to teach the better way, different from my usual way of doing it." Kafita added, "The teaching system itself as well as the demands thereof will just drive you from your place as a teacher to look for assistance or information."

The statements made by teachers demonstrated that teachers at various schools relied on each other for professional assistance. Working as a team gave them an advantage to be free and open to each other for consultation. Teachers reach out to each other for teaching material and resources, as well as for professional knowledge and skills because the challenges and demands in some subject could not leave any single teacher unmoved. Focus group teachers at School A explained their interactions, the strategies they used to create and maintain team culture, and how counselling and disputes between teachers at school were settled. Fyeenaye stated:

When a colleague got a problem such as death or happy moments such as weddings in the family, we support each other. We have put a system in place and clearly stipulated the conditions to contribute financially like how much depending on the nature of the problem. For example, how much to contribute for a colleague having a daughter or a son who is getting married, lost a biological child or spouse and so on... We also advice and counsel each other when we have difficulties and problems. Even physically-wise, hygienic and self-maintenance we often get the ideas from one another for example, kind of creams, lotions or cosmetics to use to maintain ourselves in a clean, healthy and presentable way. We really help each other.

The quote indicated teachers supporting each other emotionally and financially during difficult times of mourning. They also helped each other in different social aspects of life. Fimana added:

As part of our team-building we have a culture of choosing what we call “a friend of the year” by randomly picking up a name of any colleague from a box. For the whole year you remain friends, give each other gifts on your birthdays, and support each other or whatever you think is promoting your relationship as friends. Then at the end of the year we have a party as teachers just to strengthen our relationship as a team. We cook, we eat, we give each other gifts and laugh together, and in that way, we know each other better.

According to Fimana, teachers at school A engaged in social team-building activities that brought them close and got to know each other. Fiyeingepo explained how counselling was dealt with. She said:

...we have the “elders’ wing” which constitutes only senior teachers from the age of 50. Teachers who have problems with each other are referred to this wing for discussion, advice and counselling. We find this elders’ wing very effective because once they talk to these teachers you never hear anything again and in most cases the problem is solved. Our problems do not go out in public because they are handled in a mature manner by our seniors.

The strategy used by the school to handle and solve problems between teachers reflected the adult-child traditional norm as grounded on the background and fundamental childhood beliefs which perceived elders or seniors as knowledgeable, skilful and experts who could be trusted for problem-solving skills. From the contention made by the teacher, the mechanism seemed effective as cases were peacefully resolved in mature ways without leaking to the outside. The relationships and interactions of teachers at School A demonstrated teachers in considerate numbers in face-to-face contact and support with their principals and other colleagues through different ways namely: professional, social, financial and emotional. As Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) asserted, such teachers tended to build up an improved

sense of dedication and respect than those who were not exposed to such kind of support. In addition, interactions also assisted them to acquire different skills and knowledge for enhanced performance and afterwards admiration by their supervisors.

In the same vein, teacher and management interactions at School B were described as inspiring and inviting. Kafita said, “The relationship between teachers and management is good, because we always get support and assistance from the management such as the head of departments, the principal and the school board.” Kandina confirmed:

When one of us gets a problem like death in the family, others are giving their helping hand to share the pain and for consolation. We share jokes and stories as we came from various places and laugh together as colleagues. These things deepen and strengthen our relations. Our management staff or supervisors normally do not isolate themselves from us, they also come to join and socialize with us. We form a group as we laugh and share the food together. There is no discrimination, and this to me means that our relationship is good.

Teacher relationships and interactions at School B reflected what teachers at School A said because teachers there also supported each other socially, professionally, emotionally and financially. It appeared the motive of supporting and assisting each other was triggered by the common aspiration to improve and produce desired results as a team. This norm could only take place in school contexts where teachers were comfortable with each other to discuss and share ideas with each other without feeling intimidated.

How teachers understood and made their interpretations was guided by social interaction designs found in school contexts because they determined the nature of relations between or among the teachers in terms of who and what to talk about; where and the condition of the discussion; and the degree of openness and comfortability of participation and expression (Spillane et al., 2002). It also indicated that the school was headed by and has the majority of senior teachers with strong fundamental beliefs. Where team work was predominant and taken as culture, teachers assisted each other for the common goal of increasing their school performance.

*Unhealthy relationships:* However, unhealthy relationships between teachers at schools were understood as distracting the concentration of learners to do their school work effectively. Unfortunately, the problem was related to gender in this case. Lineekela said:

There are many female teachers at our school...but in some cases you just find some not talking to each other. When teachers are not in good terms it can be easily detected even by learners especially when they are exchanging classes the oncoming

stands in the door not saying anything to the other. It gives a negative impression to learners and instead of concentrating on lessons they will be busy figuring out the problem between the two teachers. You teach learners, but at the same you destroy them.

While teachers at School A reported doing well on team building and mutual support, they also said that at times they felt ignored and disregarded because their opinions were not considered when it came to decision making. Fyeenaye stated:

At times the management members see themselves that they are the masters as they hold the high school positions, and as such they have power and authority in all decisions regarding the school. Once they decide on something it is very much difficult to change despite teachers' dissatisfaction or complains. If their decision happens to change, it usually comes with a change of attitude towards the teachers.

Etuhole also expressed his disappointment saying, "Our supervisors mostly give us the kind of respect we need, but sometimes you find them not talking to you personally, they just harass you over something among other colleagues in public." These experiences were not positive and therefore they could cause negative impacts on the sense-making of teachers. According to Kelchtermans (1996), harassment would trigger feelings of powerlessness and embarrassment. The other stressful relationship was expressed between the management and teaching staff at School C. Pendapala said:

The relationships between the teachers and the management are somehow, not that very good but if you observe superficially you may say that we are doing well. The main problem in our relationship is communication. Communication at our school is not good because we are not given information about some things on time or sometimes not at all. We usually get information from teachers at other schools while nothing is said or informed at our school. We do not know what happens to the circular letters received at our school, maybe they are kept and stored somewhere there; they are not displayed on the notice board in the staffroom for everybody to read. Apart from communication, the relationships are also not good. You go there to ask for assistance, it is a matter of probability, if you are lucky, you get it; if not then you go and see where you can get it.

The assertion above suggested the harmful technique of communication which was incapacitated by lack of information dissemination, poor professional support and teacher isolation as opposed to collaboration. Teachers appeared to be living in fear, uncertainty and distrust. However, the situation looked different when it came to emotional and financial support. Penelao said:

When one of us is mourning a relative for example, some of us go there to deliver the message of condolences and we contribute something to assist our colleague financially. Teachers at our school mostly behave in professional manner, you hardly find them talking to each other in unprofessional ways. When there is a disagreement, they sit down and solve their problems amicably.

In this extract it seemed that teachers supported each other emotionally, financially and socially. What teachers highlighted above reflects the notion by Kelchtermans (1996) that teacher vulnerability in terms of relationships in the school mainly deteriorates with the principal, parents and to a lesser degree with colleagues. It seems the relationships among the teaching staff members was more relaxed and inviting, while those between them and the management or supervisors was tense and rigid. According to Zembylas (2004, p. 196), poor communication of teaching staff is a serious source of teacher frustration. On the other hand, positive relationships enhance motivation and self-confidence. In the same vein, Ballet, Kelchtermans and Loughran (2006) advised that regular and fruitful work for teachers as colleagues required action on all fronts, with the value that was placed on shared work to be both said and shown. This meant that school managers were expected to be exemplary by showing what they expected teachers to do. As Spillane et al. (2002) expressed, the pattern of social interaction in schools determined an extent of comfortability and freedom for discussions and negotiations. Unhealthy relationships could impact on teaching in negative ways because without communication, teachers would not consult and assist each other.

### **7.3.2 Teacher-parent interactions**

Spillane et al. (2002) accentuated the importance of situational differences of “multiple organizational contexts” in which teachers’ work was nested because they caused differential influences on teacher sense-making and understanding. The differences of multiple communities in which they were operating had the capacity to facilitate or impede teacher understanding and their actions in classrooms. Teacher interactions with other stakeholders outside the school such as parents greatly shaped their sense-making towards their role as implementers and how others perceived them. The curriculum understanding was again linked to the issue of teacher identity (Weick et al., 2005) and how others perceived and treated teachers.

Teachers marked that parents, though in small numbers, tried to accord respect and value to the teaching status and instill the same in their children and communities. Teachers acknowledged big efforts made by the small number of parents who invested energy, time,



and finances to commitment, not only for the benefit of their own children, but also for the school and communities in general. Kandina admitted saying: “There are some parents who take good care and show interest in education, pay regular visits to school and do all that is required of them by the school regarding their children.” Iyaloo said that for motivation and rise of performance for both teachers and learners, some parents inspired the spirit of teaching and learning competition among the stakeholders as they donated money to be used for prize-giving by the best-performing individuals. She stated:

...parents in the community also give amounts of money for the best teachers and learners. Like this year, the school got respective amounts of NAD 2000, 1000 and 200 from three different parents to be won by teachers and learners who do well in performance.

Granted that intrinsic motivation had to be instilled in learners, for the purpose of school record and reputation, the strategy appeared attractive and effective as everyone needed acknowledgement and recognition. Notwithstanding the financial attempts made by parents to motivate learners and teachers; Iyaloo also found parents at her schools reliable and useful because they could be summoned to attend to discussions for urgent and critical issues, which she said they willingly attended and found the joint solution in common.

Fyeenaye also remarked the effort of the small percentage of parents who were working tirelessly to ensure that education was carried out the best way possible in their community. She acknowledged that the small number of caring parents could even sacrifice during examination times at the end of the year, to guard learners who camped at school to study overnight. She said:

That 20% from the parents is doing its best. For example, during examination time learners camp at school so that we can supervise and keep them away from distractions such as she-beens and alcohol drinking...teachers sacrifice their time and themselves to supervise learners even until 23h00 and travel home late after making sure that they have all gone to sleep. Some parents volunteer to supervise and spend the nights there, because those learners need to be well cared for as if you are a security guard.

The data findings indicated that though in a small number, there were still parents out there who cared and supported teachers, schools and education in general. This confirmed what Hamunyela (2008) found that there were some parents in the region who showed interest in school-related matters as they participated in a variety of ways like donating teaching and

learning materials, classroom observations, volunteered to teach culture and tell traditional stories, to mention but a few.

However, some parents were observed showing negative attitudes such as gossiping and spreading rumors about teachers to children. This resulted in learners' ill-behaviour because when they come to school, as Etuhole put it, "they throw it right in your [teacher's] face." This practice was not seen as assisting learners to learn but, just a waste of precious time and effort. This experience of negative behaviour of some parents towards school, teaching and learning, would evoke the feelings of discouragement and disappointment in teachers. Though teachers were not pleased with the negative attitude some parents and community members were demonstrating to teachers, they also blamed teachers as contributing to it in certain ways. Etuhole, Panduleni and Shingodjo made remarks of unethical behaviour of some teachers in communities perceived to be one of the major contributing factors escalating professional disrespect and dishonor. Etuhole stated:

The way they, mainly young ladies, dress in unprofessional ways; and the way they use to drink alcohol and get drunk in the public...destroy confidence and respect that learners and communities at large have in us.

And Panduleni:

Teachers in those days were behaving well and were exemplary, but now you find teachers sharing drinks with learners... dragged from cuca shops drunk... Then comes the way we dress as teachers...our inappropriate behaviour as teachers and the way we dress, especially new teachers, do not earn us respect from people ... we need to be careful not lose our reputation, we have to be exemplary.

Shingodjo said it all saying:

There are many things that make communities not to respect teachers as before. One, teachers of today do not respect themselves...they are abusing alcohol in front of community members and learners. Two, is love affairs even with school children; and three, this issue of cash loans. If we are this kind of teachers, do you think the communities respect us? That is why you hear mostly in media teachers labelled. Most teachers are those young ones, the way they dress you cannot differentiate them from club dancers, and you cannot name them. Teacher dressing code is no longer applied.

It appeared that inappropriate behaviour of teachers nowadays such as alcohol abuse and drunkenness, unprofessional dressing, love relationships, and the borrowing of money greatly put the teaching profession to dishonor and contributed to some community members losing confidence and trust they had for teachers in the past. High beliefs and expectations

communities had for teachers obviously made teachers highly visible and put them at the center in such a way their behaviour became a great concern to receiving close monitoring for judgment than their ordinary community fellows. As Kelchtermans (1996) asserted, high visibility made teachers vulnerable objects of gossips, rumors and condemnation due to social, financial or personal lives in communities (also Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). Such contempt and disrespect could also impact on classroom teaching in negative ways because it was associated with unpleasant emotions.

### **7.3.3 Role of school communities**

Change and change implementation are dictated by political, economic, cultural, social and technological needs in school environments. Kusumaningrum et al. (2017) asserted that school communities play an important role in improving the education quality because they advise and support the schools by ensuring that implementation addresses these needs and suggests solutions in their specific contexts. Thus, their participation depended on the needs and socio-cultural beliefs held. Teachers in this study also confirmed that school communities played a role in the shaping of what was happening in their classrooms. Fyeenaye, Etuhole, Panduleni and Penehafo indicated that their schools were surrounded by many she-beens and cuca shops, and they saw it as an obstruction to the learning environment because they cause noise pollution and expose learners to temptations of consuming alcohol on their way to and from school. Some learners, due to lack and need of accommodation, were reported to live in such conditions with their relatives.

Referring to his “three-legged pot” mental picture for effective learning environment, Panduleni underlined that one leg of the pot was made up of parents in combination with

...community members, especially traditional leaders who have to play a major role in the education of children by making sure that there are no she-beens or cuca shops nearby the school environment...because there are noises coming from there which hinder the learning environment of learners, and after school they pass by those places and find themselves consuming alcohol.

Penehafo, Penelao and Pendapala from School C had their school located in a newly proclaimed busy town along the borders. Penehafo explained the predicament of their school as follows:

...the behaviour of businesspeople in our town reflects the expression which says: “elenga ihali yavala likwao la wa konghambe” [literally mean: “a chief does not care/mind about its counterpart fell down the horseback”]. Businesspeople employ

school children whom we teach here so we are now teaching learners who are also employees. In the morning they come to school as learners wearing uniforms, but underneath the school uniform there are T-shirts so that after school they remove off the school uniforms and give them to their younger siblings to take home while they go to start their afternoon shifts. Employed learners do not attend school regularly, their concentration in schoolwork is very poor, and hardly do homework and their performance are overall very bad. The community is really problematic, and this is affecting teaching and learning process very badly.

The blame was directed to businesspeople; that they became stumbling blocks in the schooling of learners as they employed them as casual workers in afternoons after school. In the same vein, Penelao raised the concern of teenage pregnancy issue which was rampant among very young girls. She understood that poor parental guidance and strong influence from the developing school environment had a hand in it. Young school girls who did not have strong foundations from homes felt inspired as they looked at other young town girls and women carrying babies on their backs and took it as an admirable fashion. As a result, they imitated and followed the bad example not knowing that it would cause them problems including their schooling opportunities.

The findings indicated that the contexts of school environments differed from school to school, with some being more challenging and pressing than others. According to Day and Leitch (2001), aspects such as motivation, commitment and abiding passion were critical for effective teaching. However, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) pointed out that as much as teachers felt unhappy and offended by the life conditions of their learners, their inspiration and encouragement were also likely to decline, because feelings had an effect on personal motivation for more effort and confidence to achieve one's own goals. Thus, how teachers responded to make decisions regarding preparation and teaching would likely be influenced by what they ascribed to their reasoning. This is because, the more the parents and school communities are involved in and are concerned about education, the more understanding and knowledgeable they become of the school programme and of the teachers' role. This enables them to support and mobilise for resources from all available sources to contribute and improve learners' learning academic and performance and achievement (Kusumaningrum et al., 2017).

## **7.4 The Influence of School Organizations on Teacher Interpretation**

The sense-making theory (Spillane et al., 2002) explicates the importance of the situational differences provided by the spaces in which teachers work. This is because they allow for variations in the way they offer professional support to the implementing agents within their boundaries. In addition to teachers' individual differences such as qualifications and knowledge, the degree of support about new policy reforms provided by schools and districts also shape and influence the way it is understood and implemented by teachers. Various learning opportunities provided to teachers by different schools within different districts encourage them to take change ideas seriously. New knowledge and ideas shared among teachers within the jurisdictions would be reflected in classrooms of specific schools in specific districts and could yield in differed and outstanding responses to new policy proposals.

Situational variations in school and district conditions can enhance teacher autonomy and independence to act as professionals as they can assist implementing agents to develop a clear and common understanding of the school purpose and instill common values within them. However, inability for some conditions impedes such growth and development within its teachers and learners. School organizations are the arrangements or schedules and activities within the working place. The experiences of teachers in this regard were different as determined by their schools and subjects. These are categorized into subject and departmental meetings; administrative work and other duties; and demands for accountability.

### **7.4.1 Subject and departmental meetings**

The data indicated that school organizations provide opportunities for teachers to conduct meetings according to subject or department areas where they discussed and deliberated on different aspects related to their work. Etuhole expressed his experiences:

We have subject departments and different committees for different subjects. At times we come together twice a term and discuss about our subjects and help each other. I also assist teachers who come to me from other schools experiencing problems, mostly whom I have worked with when I was a facilitator in those years.

This extract indicated professional communities at subject levels in which teachers got opportunities to discuss, share knowledge and assist each other. It also showed some forms of informal collaboration and freedom of choice made by teachers regarding who to consult based on mutual trust and friendships. However, it appeared that the school provided too

limited learning opportunities at subject and department levels, two per term, while teachers encountered problems daily. On the other hand, Penehafo from School C stated:

...there is no head of department for Social Sciences at our school. We are under the department of Commerce which is actually for Accounting, Economics and Entrepreneurship. The Commerce head of department does not know History... it is very difficult and as you know, workshops are no longer conducted...Once you go there with your problems you would not be assisted.

The assertion above highlighted the problem that not all subject teachers at schools were allocated with head of departments. This caused teachers to be left out to suffer lack of assistance and support. However, some teachers were not satisfied with the kind of support they received from their head of departments. Penehafo, also from School C, aired her discontentment:

We are just lucky to have an experienced teacher [name mentioned] whom we rely upon in everything regarding the subject. We really help each other because we sit down and discuss all our problems. We also set up our question papers together. Our collaboration and cooperation were caused by the fact that our head of department does not have enough knowledge in the subject, our mother tongue. For the past three or four years we are just on our own.

It appeared teachers were discontented because of minimal or little professional assistance they received from their head of department. The inability to get assistance from the head of department due to limited knowledge in the subject caused teachers to develop a coping strategy of building a subject team for mutual assistance and collaboration. Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) highlighted that teamwork helped teachers to acquire different types of knowledge and skills needed by teachers through interactions with one another. It appeared that department areas were too broad, as they were including too many subjects which made it difficult to find an appropriate qualified candidate in all subjects allocated within that department to be appointed as a head. This put some subject teachers in unfortunate positions at schools when it came to professional assistance and guidance in their respective subjects.

Another difference also lay in the provision and arrangements of materials made by the subject departments in schools, clusters and circuits. Teachers whose subject departments gave more assistance tended to develop wider and varied understanding and therefore encouragement regarding classroom practice. The teaching experience as well as the professional opportunities teachers attained at subject level appeared also to heighten their confidence and increase expertise and skills to solve problems. For example, Etuhole who

was trained as a subject facilitator proved to be self-confident and felt being in full control of the situation despite the challenges encountered. As Spillane et al. (2002) asserted, teacher interactions with others and the patterns of social interactions in their contexts had great potential to shape their understanding.

#### **7.4.2 Administrative work and other duties**

Administrative work refers to other work besides teaching. Teachers said that they did not only teach, but they also had to do some extra duties at schools and communities. Teachers responded to this topic with high emotions. The experiences and perceptions of many teachers did not really favour administrative work. Kandina said:

The administration duties are really irritating us because we have no time. These duties are taking up much of the teaching time. Instead of planning and preparing our lessons we are expected to arrange and put those many files in order, but in reality, those files do not contribute anything to the performance of learners. They are just a matter of formality. We request the ministry to employ special people for this work.

Penelao stated:

The paperwork tasks are just too many, and according to my own personal views I do not see the usefulness of some. What matters is attending to learners in classrooms...to me those things such as calendar of activities are just a waste of time than just going straight to the syllabus, scheme of work, lesson plan and finish. Then from there I just go to present the lesson to learners and give activities.

Etuhole said:

This new policy requires us to have too many subject files. Sometimes a teacher is no longer a teacher, is just an administrator. There is too much administration work. Instead of concentrating on your school work like teaching, you are just busy with these many subject files. It is too time-consuming.

And Fiyeingepo:

The administrative work is taking up and in many cases is obstructing the time I am supposed to use for planning and teaching... So, at times I find myself neglecting my teaching duties and going to class not thoroughly prepared. If manage to prepare, I will not have all the teaching aids and my assessment activities needed in place...is too much and overloading... class observations by our supervisors may be cancelled because of this; and it obstruct our opportunities to get feedback and improve on teaching... it would be better if this paperwork reduced so that we can give our undivided attention to teaching for quality education.

And lastly Kakuna:

...your periods are totally disrupted and just think of the time and all the effort to borrow materials for use, at the end of the day is a waste of everything... I am suggesting that the ministry should just employ special people to do this kind of work because it is really disturbing.

All the teachers above argued against the administrative work which they found disrupting and taking up much time they had to spend in planning and teaching. Many appeared also to believe that administrative work was just a matter of formality which did not directly affect the important goal which was the performance of learners. The intensification thereof was seen as shifting teachers' attention from their core duties of teaching to becoming administrators and two teachers proposed that special people should be recruited to do the work on their behalf.

The increasing paperwork and other administrative duties at schools made teachers to develop some negative emotions towards them. Kafita asserted:

Honestly, I do not like this administration work, it gives me a headache. Because, while you are busy preparing your lessons, planning the activities to give to your learners, and marking the homework/activities for the previous day; there you are told to submit your target settings, or expected to set your year plan and many things not related to your classroom teaching which you as a teacher is expected to do on a daily basis...it disturbs us and takes up a lot of our time to do what we have to do.

In the same vein Fyeenaye stated:

Apart from time, administration work takes us out of our teaching moods, because, once you get disrupted you stop what you were doing all in the name of certain forms to be completed very urgently to be submitted early the following day. They distract our mood and determination to reach the teaching goal. One more thing is that we are not trained to do those things, it takes much of our time to study some forms so that we can complete them correctly.

It seemed that teachers did not see any good use of administrative work that it became so irritating and affected their moods and emotions in a negative way. Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) alerted against intensification because it was noted leaving teachers with less time to keep up with subject developments for professional improvement which would affect the performance of learners. Running out of teaching time was also seen as tempting teachers to select the core content for examination only. The data indicated that teachers' relaxation or down time even after working hours was cut short by the marking duty. This was caused by



not having enough time to mark at school; therefore, teachers were compelled to carry the burden home and sacrifice the time they had to spend with their families to catch up with the pressure. As again Ballet and Kelchtermans (2009) contended, time reduction and inability for the teachers to upgrade with latest developments and improvements in their teaching skills turned them into deskilled and de-professionalised professionals. Too much preoccupation with paperwork, administration and extra-mural activities could have a crucial consequence on the quality of learners' performance and achievement. This agrees with Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) that too many tasks and activities disturb teacher concentration on their teaching activity.

Apart from teaching, teachers also related their other roles and duties to the way they implemented the curriculum. Etuhole said that he acted as a sport organiser and a school board member. In the same vein, Kapandu was also a member of the management committee at her school and worked under time pressure as well. She said:

Besides my teaching role I am also a member of the school management. The time to teach in class is not always sufficient. In cases when the principal is away, I find myself managing the school. It includes the supervision of the fellow teachers and learners at school in matters like time management and keeping learners in classrooms when some teachers are absent. This may result in your teaching time in class reduced and thus your work progress affected.

The extra tasks and responsibilities for Kanona were not only at school, but also in her community and church environment.

At school I am a member of some committees, and I am the supervisor of the cultural group as an extra-mural activity at school. Our school participates in cultural festivals at constituency and regional levels. When our learners performed well, they represent the region at national level and I have to accompany them. It is hectic, sometimes it prompts me to wake up at nights to mark learners' homework because in the afternoons I was busy with sports...My responsibilities in the community are also many. I am an elder and a member of the Stewardship Committee at my church. I am a member of the church choir, even right now I am expected to be at the choir rehearsal. Besides the church responsibilities, I am also a member of our community board and I am involved in other activities in our community.

Three teachers, Iyaloo, Panduleni and Shingodjo occupied promotional posts at their schools. Iyaloo was a head of department for commerce, while Panduleni and Shingodjo were appointed as school heads. This study understood and acknowledged that the administrative load held by teachers in management posts was heavier than that of the teaching staff.

Therefore, this study was not in any way comparing the loads between the two groups, however, it only looked on the impact that the load had on their working lives as teachers and the impact it had on their teaching time. Iyaloo asserted that besides her duties as a head of department she was also heading the feeding program at her school. She also coached the school netball team and did voluntary counselling after school. In the line of his administration duties, Shingodjo was more frustrated by too many workshops which he had to attend as a school head. He found the workshops too many and not well coordinated saying:

...everyone is working on his or her own. You attend this workshop here, but at the same time you are invited to attend the other there, and you may end up attending different workshops for consecutive weeks. This leaves you with no time to attend to your learners.

Panduleni gave an account of his administrative duties at different levels: school, cluster and circuit. At school level he should do overall daily supervision of head of departments, teachers, workers and learners; preparation of lessons and the teaching process. He also should do classroom observation for every teacher in school. He should attend to disciplinary cases for both teachers and learners; subject and department meetings and conduct management and staff meetings to inform the staff about the new changes and developments. He also should advertise, arrange and conduct interviews; induct and orientate new school staff; and act as a school spokesperson to outsiders and parents. As a cluster school principal, he should render assistance to schools in his cluster, and stand in for the circuit inspector in absentia, to mention but a few. Like Shingodjo, he acknowledged time pressure on his teaching work stating:

My roles and expectations make it difficult for me to plan, mark or consult my colleagues because time is not on my side...it is not easy. That is why I sometimes say I feel pity for learners who fall under my teaching because many times I am away and when I come back my learners are behind.

The data highlighted that extra responsibilities had a negative effect on teachers' time by making it infrequent to do school work, this was a problem that could lead them to sacrifice their private time to complete the syllabus (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). This confirms the assertion by Rosenholtz (1989) that other commitments and roles teachers play outside the school life preoccupy their thoughts and take up much of their time and energy for preparation and teaching. Besides, Sammons et al. (2007) reveal that emotions that teachers experience from other roles and responsibilities also had an impact on teachers' energy and

motivation to carry out teaching activities. Time constraints do not only reduce teachers' opportunities to consult colleagues for feedback, collaboration and sharing of ideas for effective teaching; however, it also impedes detailed explanation of all subject topics with students, as teachers are tempted to choose only the essential curriculum contents in an examination-based style (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

#### **7.4.3 Demands for accountability**

Teacher highlighted accountability for their actions demanded through constant supervision and competition inculcation. Supervision of teachers by immediate supervisors at schools, circuits or regional levels was extensive and constant. At schools, teachers stated that they were continually monitored daily by principals and head of departments as they were expected to perform at standard level. Hamutwe explained:

At school we have what we call standards achievement. We set our standards...at the end of the trimester or at end of the year so that they pressurize us to achieve our own performance. We also increase learner achievements by giving or orientating learners to some good exemplary around or somewhere far from them.

Kapandu stated:

Most pressure comes from the principal who is in direct contact with us and who supervises our daily work. The school principal checks the CASS of the learners and monitors how you assessed them in terms of how much work was given and how marks were allocated. The principal demands something from you while at the same time you are busy with other tasks.

And Kanona:

We are working under pressure that we always strive for better percentage in our subjects. You always try to satisfy the principal and other officers upwards. In cases when learners perform very poorly you are asked by the principal to explain why you have not reached the desired target. I remember last year some of the teachers were asked by the office of the circuit inspector to explain in writing why their learners did not perform well.

It seemed that teachers were supervised and monitored continuously regarding how they were teaching in classrooms, assessing learners' written work and improving the performance and achievement of learners. However, not only teachers were under pressure, school managers also experienced the same fate. Shingodjo, the school principal said: "The pressure starts with

your immediate supervisor, the inspector, who expects you to deliver good results otherwise he asks you to explain why you do not deliver.” In the same vein Panduleni asserted:

There is competition, after every evaluation before the following term starts, as teachers we come together and analyse the results. We pinpoint to those who did not perform well and ask them why they could not achieve well. Then the teacher states the reasons why and a staff will see how to assist him or her.

It appeared that teachers had to work as teams for their schools’ outstanding performance. According to Panduleni, accountability had a positive common purpose for assisting one another. In view of what was said, it appeared that the purpose of asking why the teacher could not perform was not essentially to punish or demean each other, but rather to identify and face the problem conjointly so that they could find a solution as a team by assisting and helping one another. This sense-making indicated teacher collaboration and interaction for common mutual goal. As Spillane et al. (2002) expressed, the pattern of social interaction in schools determined an extent of comfortability and freedom for discussions and negotiations. It likely took place in school contexts where teachers feel comfortable and relaxed to discuss and share ideas without feeling intimidated. Poor and unsatisfactory performance of learners was said to increase pressure on teachers to work hard for better achievement.

Accountability was also experienced from the side of learners. As Kapandu said, “...another pressure comes from the learners because you must dedicate most of your time on the evaluation of their work. You cannot simply assess some and leave others unattended.” This compelled teachers to do the marking regularly and on time. Shingodjo also remarked on accountability from smart and well-gifted learners saying: “...if you do not prepare your lesson thoroughly you may find yourself unable to provide answers to your learners’ questions.” It appeared that the pressure for accountability was not only directed to subject teachers; it seemed that the higher the position occupied, the more accountability was in demand.

What teachers said above reflected school-external calls or demands which were compelling, unavoidable and authoritative received from the top. Teachers found it difficult to ignore or question them as they were afraid to lose their professional credibility and reputation (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009). As Tabulawa (2013) asserted, the increase of accountability was motivated by the ambition to achieve productivity for global economy competition. To realise this, education and training in many countries were reformed in such a way that they impart knowledge, skills and attitudes for the new economy; and measures to raise

accountability were put in place. Some of the measures used in the education sector included the ranking of schools according to performance in external national examinations taken in grades 10 and 12; and the publishing of school results in local and national newspapers to the public to “shame or name” (p.153) underperforming teachers, principals and schools. The pressure appeared to be hierarchical because none in the education structure was immune to accountability.

Another incentive devised for accountability was the awarding of prizes to the best performers. As it was aimed by the initiative; all teachers interviewed at personal level felt the challenge as directly compelling them to do their best amidst all the stumbling blocks in their ways. This was because many teachers revealed their desire to be acknowledged and recognised in their work. However, teaching to increase the performance of learners for an award did not consider the use of the learner-centered approach. The following teachers explained this:

Sometimes you must adjust from learner-centered approach to teacher-centered approach because of time pressure that you have to call learners and preach to make them to understand. (Panduleni)

If you realise that when you use learner-centred approach your learners do not understand, why can't you go with the next teacher-centred, which makes your learners understand? It is better you go with that one if your learners make it. Then you get your award because they do not emphasise on the style of teaching. (Iyaloo)

The initiative urged and demanded for the participation and involvement of all the education stakeholders, starting from the fundamental implementing agents in the teaching-learning process in the classroom field that was, teachers and learners; to the immediate supervisors at schools, inspectors of education at circuits, to the top regional directors and parents. The incident was said to be executed at three levels: school, circuit and regional; however, for some schools it was an occasional event, because it was not regular, probably due to time and resources. Besides, the awarding was grouped into three categories of best performers that is, the learner, the teacher and the school.

## **7.5 Regional and National Conditions for Professional Development**

The sense-making theory posits that the work of implementing agents is “nested in multiple organizational contexts” (Spillane et al., 2002 p.409). This implies that teachers as implementers operate in multiple communities. The uniqueness of each community the

teachers work in, has the potential to uphold or discourage their understanding and what they do in classrooms. The situational differences at regional level have the influence on how teachers understand and play their professional roles. Regional conditions involved the kind and quantity of resources available and provided for assistance and the way information is disseminated to teachers regarding their professional position and development. It also depends on the different degrees of respect, trust, and significance accorded and communicated to teachers by regional managers because they help establish differed regional culture that can maintain or destroy teachers' self-efficacy. Regional subject teacher networks have the potential to create significant differences, since they offer opportunities and assistance for inventions and change. Such opportunities engage teachers in dialogue about new technology of teaching to expose new ideas of pedagogy and give helpful perspective necessary for considerate change.

How the policy was disseminated and communicated, that is, the manner it was made known to implementers at regional or national levels as well as the creation of learning opportunities impact greatly on how it is understood and practiced. This involves the creation of learning opportunities where subject teachers mutually discuss and share their experiences as they construct explanations of policy and understand its consequences on their common performance. This theme presents the data about teacher experiences of coming to know the learner-centered education policy with regard to professional learning and development opportunities at regional and national levels.

### **7.5.1 Uneven introduction opportunities to the new teaching approach**

Since all teachers interviewed were trained during the South African regime before independence, it was important to probe how they were informed and learnt about the new teaching approach. From the responses of eight narrative participants, six teachers got intensive training of the learner-centered approach, of which five namely, Hamutwe, Etuhole, Kapandu, Lineekela, Panduleni and Shingodjo went through ongoing in-service courses in the mid-1990s and early 2000s. Shingodjo, however, went through a full-time course at the University of Namibia. Except for Shingodjo, other five teachers were trained because they were teaching science subjects that were ran by aid agency projects such as Life Science Project for Life Science teachers and INSTANT project for Physical science and Mathematics teachers.

Etuhole and Lineekela went through the MASTEP (Mathematics and Science Teachers' Extension Program), the special in-service program with the University of Namibia funded by foreign aid agency meant to upgrade secondary science and mathematics teachers in the early 2000s. Panduleni was trained by the Life Science Project, and Hamutwe and Kapandu went through the BETD in-service program. Other teachers, (Kanona and Iyaloo) who taught other subjects other than science and mathematics, reported to either be introduced to the teaching approach through sporadic, once-off cascading subject workshops or upgrading courses they registered with tertiary institutions in South Africa or Namibia (Mbangula, 2010). Hamutwe shared their first encounter with the new approach as follows:

I was trained through the BETD in-service program, we were the first to be trained, and from there I also became one of the facilitators to help train teachers in workshops... I have attended a lot of meetings where we had to plan how to shuffle the things. The best way I can explain this is that we had to tell the teachers about the reform, our conducts and learners' conducts in the classroom. It was emphasized that teachers are no more just preachers, they had to plan activities that lead the learners into a critical thought, and do things their own ways, and teachers facilitate only. Normally it used to be circuit-based.

Kanona said that she heard about the learner-centered approach for the first time in 1992 when she attended the Geography workshop, the only one she could remember of. Although she was also teaching Oshikwanyama, she did not mention attending a workshop about the learner-centered approach in that subject. The two ways she said helped her to gain understanding about the approach was through upgrading courses she enrolled with higher institutions and by practice.

I started teaching before our national independence, and the learner-centred education policy was introduced thereafter. Basically, I understand it as the policy where learners are playing the central role in their education and doing something themselves. A learner is given a hint about the subject matter after which they explore and articulate things themselves. I found it to be a good policy in comparison with what we had in the past.

Kapandu said that she came to encounter the learner-centred education policy very late, when she enrolled for the BETD upgrading program between the years 2000 and 2003.

I heard about the learner-centred education before my BETD course but did not understand what it was all about. I used to follow the method I was trained about and used to, which I eventually came to be told that it was teacher-centred education. The BETD program was an eye-opener when I was introduced to the new method and observed the way we were trained. Our trainers used that new learner-centred

education method and emphasized group work and self-initiative from us as group members. They mostly paid attention to what we were doing and listened to what we were saying, which I did not know before.

It was evident from the assertions that some teachers were not prepared for the learner-centred education policy implementation (Mbangula, 2010), let alone creating a sense of dissatisfaction or sensitising them to see the problems and flaws prevailed in the previous teaching practice used (Spillane et al., 2002). This also challenged the dissemination and communication system of policy intended to prepare teachers for implementation. As Lombard (2012) argued, teacher learning opportunities was a serious need for any new curriculum invention to enhance teacher understanding and insight. For the teachers to implement the curriculum change successfully, they needed consistent and on-going support and training to be able to shape and adjust their attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and consequently their practices. This confirmed what Tabulawa (2003) claimed that learner-centred pedagogy came as a “prescription” or a condition for African countries to get financial assistance from aid agencies from rich and highly industrialised countries. As much as the African governments such as Namibia needed funds in various “forms of grants, loans, equipment and personnel” (p. 11) to develop their new independent but underdeveloped countries, they seemed to consider little about some significant phases needed for successful policy implementation. One could infer that the government was not prepared in terms of its financial and human resources to prepare its teachers regarding the teaching policy before its implementation. On the contrary, teachers were made to encounter the policy unprepared and to find their own ways through practice before they engaged in sporadic once-off workshops. Only few teachers who taught specific subjects that were targeted by foreign donor agencies had benefitted a great deal, but after the contract of the projects, teachers returned to the same par as other teachers.

### **7.5.2 Cascading workshops**

Teachers acknowledged the efforts made by the ministry of education in the early years immediately after independence and explained the present situation with regard to workshops for professional development. Hamutwe stated:

When the curriculum and the teaching method changed, there was an understanding that teachers also had to change themselves to suit the new approach. There were trainings and workshops for the teachers to be orientated about the new developments in education... The government has trained some teachers who became teacher



trainers identified as subject facilitators to make sure that every teacher is well aware of change. So, it was not really hard for the teachers to implement the change because they were always trained through workshops, it is easy for them now.

The extract indicated that the cascading workshops were facilitated by trained facilitators in respective subjects and teachers were constantly trained to implement subject curricula changes. However, not every teacher was fortunate to attend workshops. Kanona affirmed:

Workshops were conducted when the changes were introduced, arranged by the Ministry of Education where advisory teachers cascaded training to the facilitators who thereafter trained the vast number of teachers in their respective educational regions. Teachers attended workshops where they were trained about things like learner-centred approach, continuous assessment and learner group work; and how to implement them. You are fortunate if you attend a workshop when your subject undergoes any change. The last time I attended Geography workshop was in the 1990s, I forgot the exact date; and I was no more invited to any other workshop to present.

However, Panduleni an Entrepreneurship teacher, the new subject recently introduced to replace Business Management, reported that they were fully assisted and supported professionally by the region for implementation. He stated:

Before the changes took place, teachers were already well-prepared. As I said earlier, during the reform we were asked to give our input about the change and before the change occurred, we were invited to attend workshops, meetings and conferences whereby we were equipped with the methodologies, how to approach, how to teach, how to assess and all those. We were prepared as teachers ... we are invited time and again to attend refresh workshops and to be informed about the changes that come in. They are always informing us. This is done by the advisory service officials who are there on top. There are teachers who are appointed among us as subject facilitators to organize and facilitate meetings and workshops at school, cluster, circuit and regional levels. So, we are in good hands when it comes to changes. They even follow us at schools; they observe us in classrooms and check our assessments to see if we assess the right way and if we give correct assignments and tasks.

The data indicated that the teacher received ongoing support that extended even up to the classroom, and therefore was self-confident to implement the changes in the subject. It seemed that cascading workshops were only conducted when there was a need to introduce teachers to new subject changes, but the support would not live long. This was confirmed by some teachers who highlighted that formal opportunities, especially those arranged at circuit and regional levels, diminished if not totally stopped over a couple of years ago as they were no longer receiving attendance invitations for refreshing workshops.

We used to attend workshops especially in my subject, and we made contributions like designing the same scheme of work for Physical Science at circuit level. I was a Physical Science facilitator in junior secondary phase and I attended training workshops once a term then upon return I trained my fellow subject teachers in the circuit. We were trained by the Physical Science department. There were advisory teachers at Ongwediva Resource Centre. We attended enough training workshops, we were lucky enough. Nowadays, there are no more workshops they have stopped totally, everyone is just on own. I only use my knowledge as a facilitator when I have to assist a teacher at school.

The data suggested that professional support was less given from the subject experts at higher ranks. From the statement, it appeared that teachers were no longer supported other than relying on own personal knowledge and experiences gained from previous workshop trainings. This posed a big challenge to the new teachers who joined the teaching cadre. As Bantwini (2010) and Spillane et al. (2002) asserted, subject and pedagogical knowledge and skills attained from training and professional development opportunities enhanced self-confidence. The more the knowledge teachers acquired, the more they became diverse to initiate new ways of teaching and new understandings about change. That is, more teacher involvement and participation in planning influenced professional growth. Teachers who felt supported by their colleagues felt more strengthened and able to face and handle their subject problems. On the other hand, some teachers felt unfortunate and complained that they were not involved in any training to prepare them for change. Iyaloo explained how she coped with the situation:

I just accepted the changes without any training, but I ask the advisory teacher in the region to come and give orientation... in the syllabus or something new that comes up I do not know... They also realise that it is difficult.

It seemed that even the invited advisory teachers found it difficult to solve some problems regarding the implementation of learner-centred approach in overcrowded classrooms because they left some problems unresolved. This indicated that not all problems and challenges could be solved right away, and it seemed that some challenges faced by teachers at instructional level were also too immense for education officers to handle and provide answers for alternative solutions. This resulted in teachers to code switching and compromising the approach (Spillane et al., 2002). Many studies conducted in Namibia confirmed that teachers were willing to employ the learner-centred strategies, they were however constrained by factors of which some were at policy level like little or no support (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011).

It appeared there were uneven experiences and readiness to change implementation. Some teachers, such as Hamutwe who went through the BETD program, felt being well prepared for change unlike Kanona who just got very little assistance in her subject after a long period of time. It also indicated that teachers, who never went through the upgrading programs and courses such as BETD, got little assistance regarding training of the learner-centred education (Mbangula, 2010). The similar experience was confirmed by Fyeenaye as she also claimed to gain knowledge, about learner-centred education from further study courses and workshops. It seemed that there were no formal professional support programs in many subjects in place at the time as teachers were only referring to the workshops they used to attend after many years as Lineekela asserted:

We used to attend workshops, they were many. They used to invite especially new teachers, to go and get training on how to cope with all those changes. The workshops were conducted by advisory teachers. When the subject was initially introduced all teachers in the region were going to Ongwediva Teachers' Resource Centre to attend the workshops at the same time. They are very scarce now...Even if there is a workshop, it only invites new teachers.

Another indirect formal learning opportunity highlighted by Fyeenaye was the external examination marking sessions for grades 10 and 12. Qualified experienced subject teachers who applied were appointed as markers at the end of the year. She found the exercise assisting teachers to gain more subject knowledge on how to teach specific topics and mark the correct way. She said:

I have also observed that teachers come with new, useful and relevant information from the marking session once they go there. They collect a lot of information that helps them on how to teach and approach certain topics.

The data above confirmed that teacher learning differed from subject to subject as dictated by regional context (Spillane et al., 2002). Teachers expressed different views as different emotions whereby some felt well supplied with knowledge and skills, but others felt neglected and not well attended to regarding formal professional assistance in their subjects by the subject advisory teachers in the region.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the data which showed the importance of the school contexts in sense-making of implementing agents. It maintained that numerous contextual factors of the context shaped the sense-making of teachers regarding the policy and its implementation. It explained

teacher experiences of various contextual aspects, their engagement ways in coping with varied situations and discussed underground reasons for their actions and behaviour. Three broad categories of influences on sense-making discussed emerged from the school contexts, social interactions and school organizations. The next chapter discusses the findings and final thoughts of the study.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS AND FINAL THOUGHTS**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This last chapter synthesizes the findings that enable the construction of the understanding and core idea of this study. It begins with the reflections on the research process: the literature review and methodology. This is followed by the discussion of findings according to the three critical research questions; then the concluding remarks and the significance of the study.

In the two recent chapters the data from teacher stories were presented and analysed to make sense out of it. The data was identified and categorised to extract meaning about the experiences, engagement and other aspects that influenced the teachers' responses. The motive to enquire about the field of teacher development emanated from three imperatives. Firstly, the researcher's personal interest developed from being a member of the teaching crew which started the implementation of the learner-centered education policy after independence. Secondly, the imperative to understand teachers particularly in rural and developing areas since very little was known about their personal and professional development lives. Lastly, the need to enquire into the personal and socio-cultural contexts of teachers to understand the impact they made on the process of interpretation and translation of policy into practice.

The literature review indicated that the implementation of the learner-centered education policy in Namibia was not satisfactory (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009; Schweisfurth, 2011) as many classrooms were still dominated by traditional teacher-centered teaching methods (Ministry of Education, 2008; 2009). Inability to consider the cultural and contextual realities (Sullivan, 2004b) and conditions of the actual implementers would translate into the policy being adjusted or appropriated to the conditions as deemed suitable (Blignaut, 2007). According to the National Curriculum for Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2010), the conditions in and around schools and those in society at large are very critical as preconditions for successful curriculum and policy implementation. Thus, the compatibility in the principles of the borrowed policy and that of the society where it is applied should be maintained. However, studies conducted proved that many teachers aimed to implement the policy were not well oriented or prepared for change

(Iita, 2014; Mbangula, 2010), and school conditions and situations were not adjusted to enable the implementation of the learner-centered education after the Namibian independence (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011; O’ Sullivan, 2002b). Identically, inconsistent elements existing within the underlying dominant ideas, beliefs and trends of the societies in which the learner-centered education to be implemented would also cause disagreements. This is because dominant and critical ideas, beliefs and trends are embedded in the cultural, political, economic and social origin of societies (O’Sullivan, 2004b; Tabulawa, 2013; Vavrus, 2009) and undoubtedly impact on and guide the principles, expectations and ideas of the individuals. This included teachers regarding the kind of knowledge to be taught, how teaching and learning should be carried out and influence the perception of who is being taught, the learner.

In attempt to better understand why learner-centered education proved difficult in improving the quality of education and learners’ academic performance, this study assumed that there was a need to take a closer consideration of underlying ideas and premises of this adopted policy and determine whether they were on par with the dominant beliefs and trends in our contexts. This study set out to explore the cognitive sense making of teachers to understand the tension they underwent because of the conflicting dominant ideas that lied between their personal beliefs, experiences and knowledge and the policy demands. The exploration focused on the discovering and understanding of the deeper underlying aspects that underpin and create the tension between teachers’ internal states and the new adopted learner-centered policy. It has thus, investigated the personal, professional, and socio-cultural factors that hindered the implementation of the radical, progressive learner-centered education curriculum in the last two decades. The analytical framework from Spillane et al. (2002) was used to examine the aspects at personal, contextual and policy levels in the process of policy implementation sense-making.

The study was directed by the main research question: ***How does the learner-centered approach in Namibia affect teachers’ lives and work?*** To find the answer to that broad question, the following three critical questions were used to address specific issues:

- What are the teachers’ experiences of learner-centered approach?
- How do teachers respond to and engage with the learner-centered approach?
- Why do teachers respond to the learner-centered approach the way they do?

## **8.2 Reflections on the Research Process**

This section gives a summary of the processes taken to develop this research study. It highlights the findings that emerged from the literature reviewed, the methodology employed, and the theoretical framework adopted. The reflection gives an understanding on how the research processes used agree and support the findings.

### **8.2.1 Literature review**

Teacher experiences and work judgments are shaped and influenced by factors that emanate from the personal (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2007; Dannetta, 2002; Darragh, 2018; Day et al., 2006; Gee, 2000; Hargreaves, 1998; McCracken & Etuk, 1986; Pajak & Blasé, 1989; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Sammons et al., 2007; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Sutherland et al., 2010) and the contextual aspects (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Hirsch & Emerick, 2005; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007; Buckley et al., 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2002; Leithwood and McAdie, 2007, Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Singh & Billingsley, 1998). Teaching is influenced by the teacher's character at a given time and place and this involves sub-identities such as beliefs, attitudes, emotions, cognition and life histories (Gee, 2000).

Although the teacher-work-life topic is under-researched locally, it has been increasingly considered at regional and international levels (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009; Ballet, Kelchtermans, & Loughran, 2006; Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Mager, Myers, Maresca, Rupp, & Armstrong, 1986; Malm, 2008; Sloan, 2006; Yost & Williamson, 2010) in the past twenty years. Research was conducted around different trends and patterns such as teacher workloads and satisfaction, (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008, 2009; Ballet et al., 2006; Butt & Lance, 2005; Fernandes & da Rocha, 2009; Pašková & Valihorová, 2010); teachers' perception of change (Ballet et al., 2006; Blignaut, 2007; Day & Smethem, 2009; Mager et al., 1986; Tabulawa, 1998; Vavrus, 2009); increment and intensification of teacher work/role (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; Hargreaves, 1994; Valli & Buese, 2007); its effects on student progress and outcome (Day, Stobart, Sammons, & Kington, 2006; Hart, 1994; Louis, 1998; Sammons et al., 2007); social status of teaching and stereotypes (Buckley et al. 2005; Ware, 1992; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Tye & O'Brien, 2002; Ottevanger et al., 2005; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Moore, 2008) and parental involvement (Buckley et al. 2005; Hamunyela, 2008; Rosenholtz, 1989). Findings indicate that teachers from similar social and

cultural contexts show similar experiences and perceptions across time, continents and teaching expertise, and their dissatisfaction regarding work were insistently mounting (Yost & Williamson, 2010).

The concept curriculum can be viewed as rational, empirical, pragmatic or existential depending on how it is related to learners, teachers, and pedagogy (Chikumbu & Makamure, 2000). Literature indicated three ways the implementation of the curriculum can be viewed: an instrumental action, a situational praxis and an enactment perspective. The instrumental action sees teachers as instruments who have no emotions or sense of judgments, expecting teachers to abide to the rules and regulations for the desired outcomes. The situational praxis accepts the basic humanisation of implementing teachers, admitting bias and partiality in teaching because it understands that the rights and influence held by teachers in classrooms as actors in the construction of reality put them in positions to change and amend the curriculum as they interpret and engage with it in classrooms (Aoki et al., 1983; Tabulawa, 1997). The enactment perspective believes that the implementation process is contextual because it is influenced by the actual conditions and realities around classrooms and schools, and the subjective thoughts of teachers and learners (Blignaut, 2008; Cho, 1998; Ottevanger, 2001).

Literature has identified two approaching methods to curriculum implementation, the fidelity approach and the mutual adaptation approach (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Cho, 1998). The fidelity approach goes hand in hand with the instrumental action as they both expected teachers to implement the reforms as intended. They do not allow for flexibilities or alternative ways as caused by situational implementation problems. However, the mutual adaptation approach relates to the enactment perspective because it accommodates certain flexibilities and different options as dictated by the needs, interests, beliefs, skills and conditions of local situations. Many African countries, including Namibia, view the curriculum from a fidelity perspective which must be implemented in the form of instrumental action (Blignaut, 2011; Ottevanger, 2001; Tabulawa, 1998).

Literature indicated that the implementation of the learner-centered education in sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide has not been effective (Bantwini, 2010; Blignaut, 2007; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Schweisfurth, 2011; Saad, 2011; Saunders & Vulliamy, 1983; Sikoyo, 2010; Tabulawa, 1997, 1998; Vavrus, 2009), with challenges and problems around its implementation being the shortage or insufficiency of teaching material and human resources; and problems related to questions of power and agency (Schweisfurth, 2011).



However, problems differ from situation to situation. The implementation of the curriculum is influenced by issues such as the nature of the reform, local and external factors. Aspects related to the nature of the reform such as need and relevance, clarity, degree of complexity, quality and practicality of change determine the level at which it is implemented by the teachers (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Carl, 2012). Local factors include teacher relations with others at school and the degree of professional, moral and psychological support they receive from them. Individual characteristics of teachers such as competencies and abilities, attitude and beliefs towards schooling, teaching and learning emerged as dominant factors impacting on decision-making on how the curriculum is executed (Bantwini, 2010; Blignaut, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Roehrig et al. 2007; Spillane et al., 2002; Stoffels, 2008; Tabulawa, 1997). Literature also indicated that the better the conditions of the schools in terms of collegial relationships and classroom aspects such as resources, size, number and interactions, the better the extent at which the curriculum is implemented in classrooms.

Equally important to the fore-mentioned are the school external factors. In addition to the provision of support services from regional and national administration, the involvement of parents and school community in school activities determine the effectiveness of how the curriculum is to be implemented (Buckley et al., 2005; Hamunyela, 2008). Lack of proper orientation and classroom assistance do not only demoralise and stress teachers, but also lead to lack of profound understanding of what is expected (Bantwini, 2010).

The failure to consider the real working situations of teachers, low professional capacity, misconceptions and inconsistencies; lack of or limited teaching and learning materials and science equipment have resulted in ineffective implementation of the learner-centered education in some Namibian contexts (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Mbongo, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009; O'Sullivan, 2004b; O'Sullivan, 2002). Similarly, big classes; lack of discipline among learners; and shortage of chairs made teachers who are willing to try the new policy resort to lecture methods to retain control over classes (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Ndemuweda, 2011). Other challenges include overloading, and shortage of time; and lack of or little support received (Mbongo, 2013).

### **8.2.2 Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive paradigm to explore experiences and responses of Namibian teachers about curriculum reforms. The model effectively facilitated the study because it enabled the study to use the qualitative data collecting techniques such as narrative

interviews; as well as the qualitative data analysis methods to interpret and understand the data. The qualitative interpretive paradigm allowed for subjective understanding of daily lived experiences of teachers in their actual school situations, and thus the motives behind their decisions for behaviour and actions (Cohen, et al., 2007; Neuman, 2014). Equally important, the narrative was a holistic approach that entailed both humanistic and constructive qualities as it enabled human perspective of the world, quality of life and education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Schwarz, 2001). Explanations were thus made from the interviews and narratives of participants to make sense of their experiences, responses and feelings in their work life.

Narratives from study participants were collected through semi-structured narrative interviews. The method was found useful in bringing out data on experiences because it honoured the voice of teachers (Hargreaves, 1996; Pillay, 2003; Schwartz, 2001). The study enabled long-serving teachers to elucidate the chain of experiences and views of reforms as shaped by their individual and social lives. Narrative interviews gave teachers an opportunity to talk about what happened, in the sequence it happened by connecting the events and attaching meanings as to why events happened the way they did (Bates, 2005; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Norris et al., 2005). This supports the suggestion that narrative interview serves as a relevant and powerful tool to help understand, conceptualise and theorise information on everyday behaviour of individuals mostly whose voice has been regularly neglected and muted (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Bates, 2005). Equally important, focus group interviews encourage and empower group voice opinions (Cohen et al., 2011), thus providing additional ideas and feelings on diverse aspects to individuals.

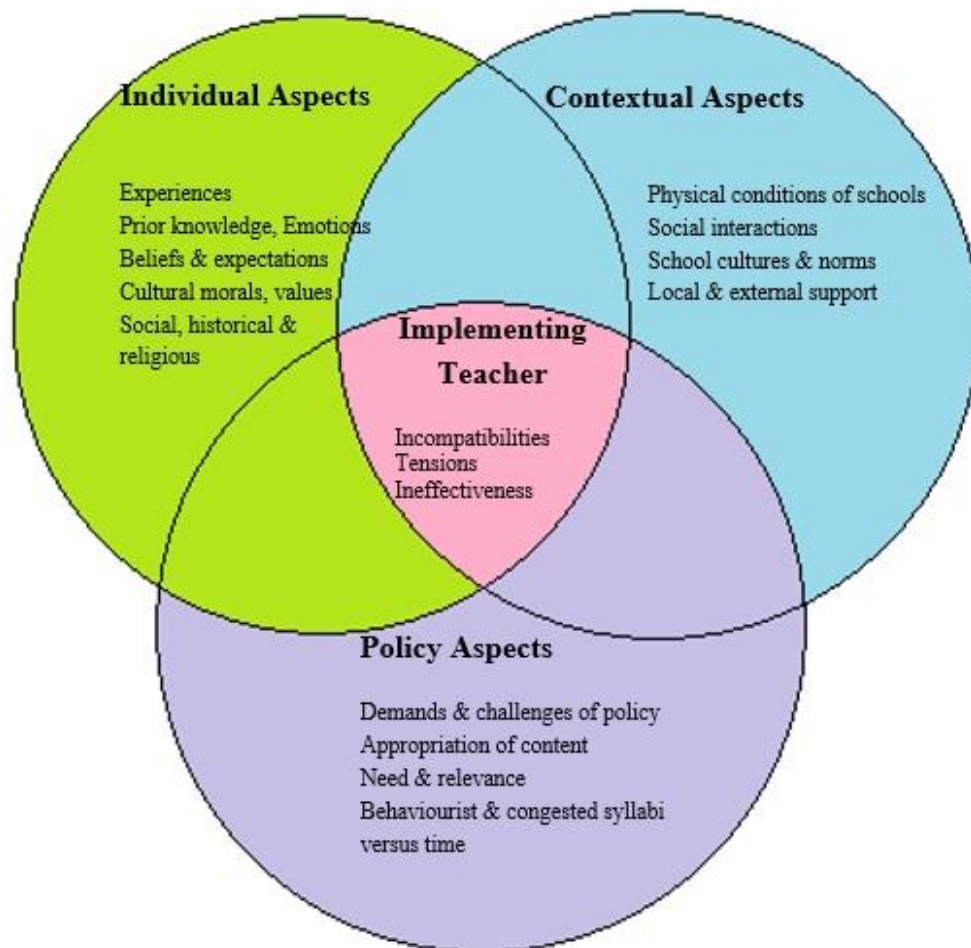
The understanding of data was made possible with the use of the narrative analysis models namely: the thematic, structural, interactional and performative. They have provided an all-inclusive approach to get all the interpretations possible because it considers both personal and contextual aspects (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). It enables the sorting of data into codes, categories and themes according to “what was said” (Kawulich & Holland, 2012; Riessman, 2008); identifies the emotions, beliefs, values, dispositions and attitudes associated with the language used in narratives; makes inferences on how they influence teacher decision-making on implementation; as well as how teachers want to be known, how and why they implemented reforms the way they did (Riessman, 2008). The first stage of analysis established the main themes of the findings namely: individual sense-making of learner-centered education, and teachers’ contextual sense-making of learner-centered education to

understand the curriculum reforms. As the name of the framework indicates, the individual and contextual aspects of sense-making process are intertwined; thus, close identification and analysis to gain deep understanding between the two concepts was critical. The understanding of aspects involved at each level in the sense-making process of policy implementation, and the meaning-making thereof were addressed with the concepts borrowed from the analytic framework (Spillane et al., 2002) adopted for this study. The second stage of analysis proceeded with the theorisation of the main findings with relevant concepts from literature and analytic frameworks to understand the background factors that emanated from the individual, contextual and policy aspects.

### **8.2.3 Theoretical frameworks**

This study employed the cognitive sense-making framework which entailed three dimensions namely; the individual, contextual, and the role of policy aspects. They helped for richer and broader insights of the sense-making process that teachers must go through to implement curriculum reforms.

**Figure 8.1: Interrelatedness of the individual, contextual and policy aspects and the position of the implementing teacher in the sense-making process. (Adapted from: Spillane et al., 2002)**



The key finding of this study indicates that all dimensions of the cognitive sense-making namely: the individual, contextual/working context and policy, have a greater impact on the sense-making of the implementing teacher. However, the incompatibilities or conflicts lying between the individual aspects and other dimensions created tension within the implementing teachers, resulting in ineffective implementation of policy reforms.

### **8.3 Discussion of the Findings**

The main objective of this study was to explore the experiences, emotions and responses of teachers towards the learner-centered education policy introduced after independence. It sets

to identify and understand, interpret and implement the new policy; explore teachers' coping ways, feelings; and how they felt their backgrounds challenged, threatened, changed, constrained or adapted to the new curriculum. It also aimed to interrogate and probe into teachers' personal backgrounds and diverse contexts and socializations to understand why they perceive, comprehend and practice the curriculum policy the way they did. The study findings are discussed in line with the critical questions of the study, starting with the core experiences underlined; followed by teacher responses and engagement strategies; and lastly the factors that prompted teacher behaviour and actions.

### **8.3.1 Teacher experiences of learner-centered approach**

The response to the first critical question regarding the experiences of teachers of the learner-centered approach the findings indicated that teachers experienced numerous curriculum reforms as dictated by individual and contextual aspects. Teacher experiences influenced by individual aspects involved mismatches and inconsistencies between their beliefs, their expectations and working contexts. Themes emerged out included an escalation of learner misbehaviour and disrespect; repeal of corporal punishment; learner pregnancy policy; and different perceptions of the learning content such as inaptness to the age-level of learners, knowledge gaps, bias of the learning content and compacted syllabi. These findings concurred with discoveries from various scholars that reforms not corresponding with teachers' education and cultural histories, experiences and contexts often clash with teachers' beliefs which impede the effective enactment of the intended reforms (Awe & Kasanda, 2016; Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Ertmer, 2005; Handal & Herrington, 2003; He & Levin, 2008; Pajares, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Tabulawa, 1998). The finding also concurred with Guthrie (2016) and Tabulawa (2013) that top-down styles did not consider the values and morals of teachers which made teachers feel being undermined.

Findings also indicated that some teacher experiences stemmed from their contextual aspects. The first theme that emerged stated the insufficiency of classrooms with very limited space, poorly supplied and supported libraries and laboratories, and shortage of teaching materials. This finding was confirmed by studies conducted in the Namibian contexts (Awe, 2007; Hamunyela, 2008; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011; Ralaingita, 2008). According to Altrichter and Kepler (2005), contextual practicality as one of the curriculum implementation factors emphasised the importance of the circumstances surrounding the context in which it is implemented. This included the availability of funds and resources to

support the implementation, classroom conditions, overcrowding and physiological issues such as safety and security. These factors served as a backbone for effective implementation thus, any deficit thereof would jeopardise the good intention of the new change (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015).

The second theme highlighted the collegial interactions and relationships which were mostly positive than negative. Teachers supported each other, not only professionally (Altrichter & Kepler, 2005; Blignaut, 2007; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Ndemuweda, 2011; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Singh & Bilingsley, 1998), but also emotionally, socially and psychologically. The desired outcomes of collegiality enhanced the implementation of the learner-centered approach as it enabled teachers to develop resources together such as writing of lessons, preparation of materials and assessment items (Jenkins, 2017) because it encouraged them to work and learn together as they apply changes (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015).

Teacher-parent relationships and the involvement of school community members indicated that only the minimal number of parents and community members showed interest and commitment in school-related activities. It was also evident that learners from supportive families showed higher degrees of self-discipline and positive attitude towards learning. This concurred with Buckley et al. (2005), Hamunyela (2008), Rosenholtz (1989) and Vavrus et al. (2011) that learners' socio-economic backgrounds, learning conditions and facilities at home impacted greatly on their academic development and progress at school. Teachers behaved and acted according to the socio-cultural beliefs of school communities. That is, teacher understanding and perceptions were influenced by their positioning and stereotyping in the contexts (Avraamidou, 2016; Johnson-Bailey, 2005). The discrimination of teachers not to teach specific topics in their curricula in fear of how their communities would respond was a clear indication for this. Furthermore, teachers were dealing with the "professional paradox" in the sense that while they were accorded lower social status and esteem and received minimum support from the communities, they were at the same time highly expected to deliver quality results by the same communities (Buckley et al., 2005).

Another theme that arose established that the level of intensification and accountability on teachers' work has been increased than before. This has resulted in time constraints that forced teachers to reduce their down time doing extra teaching without extra remunerations, and to compromise the learner-centered education policy (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009;

Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Accountability increased through school-external demands such as constant supervision, competition and answerability for learner performance in high-stakes examinations (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; 2009; Horn, 2009; Tabulawa, 2013; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). The sense of accountability yielded some positive improvement in teacher work life. Firstly, it served as means of motivation and commitment for teachers, because it enabled them to align achievement to own efforts (Pennell, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). Secondly, it fostered teamwork amongst teachers for school performance and competition for the sake of naming and shaming (Buchanan, 2015; Tabulawa, 2013). Thirdly, accountability pressed teachers to do thorough preparation to maintain professional credibility and reputation (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2008; 2009). However, increased pressure of accountability had also some negative consequences because it was reported to bring irritation, uneasiness and discomfort in teachers (Buckley et al., 2005; Tye & O' Brien, 2002). The guilty feeling, compacted syllabi, time and desire for acknowledgement made them to tailor their instruction to accountability measures to be seen as successful (Buchanan, 2015), resulting in overwork and burnout. It was also seen as de-professionalising teacher work, devaluing teacher autonomy and complicating the notion of teacher agency (Buchanan, 2015).

Another contextual experience stressed that teachers were not well-prepared and supported for change. Findings indicated that the new teaching policy did not extend equally to teachers. Concurring with Mbangula (2010), not all teachers, especially who were already in the service before independence, were introduced to the learner-centered education policy. The culmination of the cascading workshops in regions left many teachers with little or no support from subject experts because not all head of departments were supportive in all subjects at schools. This made teachers to feel left out and discriminated. According to Bantwini (2010), the absence of proper orientations to curriculum changes did not only develop the feelings of doubt and lack of profound understanding of what was anticipated in teachers, but it also caused disappointment, confusion and had teachers' perceptions of curriculum implementation tarnished when not supported and assisted in classrooms by external experts. In the same vein, Altrichter and Kepler (2005) highlighted the importance of obtainability and provision of teaching material and equipment for any policy implementation including the learner-centered education. However, the Namibian studies (Awe, 2007; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011) confirmed the lack of, and the limited provision of resources at schools as well as the sporadic and once-off consultations regarding

the preparation and orientation of teachers to new curriculum changes. This indicated the mishaps in the implementation of learner-centered approach in Namibia.

### **8.3.2 Responses and engagement ways of teachers with the learner-centered approach**

The second critical question of the study intended to find out how teachers responded to and engaged with the learner-centered policy. The findings indicated that teachers devised certain mechanisms to cope with the changing policies and situations. The responses and engagement ways were not only directed by the emotions experienced; but also, by the extent they felt their backgrounds challenged, threatened and constrained by the curriculum. The following responses and strategies were employed by teachers to cope with the changed curriculum and situations as influenced by individual and contextual conditions. Teacher responses influenced by personal interpretation emerged as differential because it was directed by their differed perceptions, knowledge, beliefs and dispositions held by teachers as a result of their uniqueness, identity and workplace conditions (Spillane et al., 2002).

The first finding in this regard indicated that teachers dealt with the problem of learner misconduct in different ways depending on personal and contextual interpretations made. However, whichever strategy used reflected that the whole learner discipline issue was a tiring and consuming process in terms of time and energy, and jam-packed with stressful emotions. This finding supported what Kelchtermans (1996) indicated, that learner discipline was a distracting factor to achieving the teaching goals. Teachers had disputing ideas regarding the discipline problem. For some teachers, teaching was an all-inclusive and holistic undertaking involving parental guidance, coaching of manners and acceptable behaviour in social life. For others however, it was an “I don’t care” strategy taken as ignoring and “leaving it just like that.” The latter opted for the mechanism to chiefly preserve their personal state of mind by avoiding at whatever cost the possible negative consequences that would emanate from disciplinary interactions with parents or learners. This concurred with LeeFon et al. (2013) that some teachers chose not to discipline or reprimand learners in fear of their own safety and that of their properties as some learners might come back for revenge. They understood that whatever they did to discipline learners would not impact much on learners. They felt powerless and vulnerable, ripped of their power and authority by some changes; hence the option to withdraw and ignore most of learners’ misconducts by just minding their teaching business activities. This finding agreed with Smith and Amushigamo (2016)) of the strong belief held by teachers that the abolishment of corporal punishment



stripped them of their power and authority in classrooms; and the perception that learners did not show respect or do their school work unless they were beaten or threatened with beatings.

Another mechanism that emerged regarding the freedom of speech and learner participation was the silencing of learners by using threatening words and shouting at learners where they found them stepping out of their lines. Teachers acted that way out of self-defence due to embarrassment and humiliation (LeeFon et al., 2013; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016) they suffered from learners during discussions. This confirmed what Gao (2008) and Schweisfurth (2011) stated, that changes that differ with personal and cultural backgrounds can hinder curriculum implementation of learner-centered education as well as power and agency.

Another finding indicated that teachers responded by conforming because neither could they change nor reject the policy. This occurred in the implementation of policies such as learner pregnancy policy and repeal of corporal punishment. Scholars such as Kelchtermans (1996; 2005) and Lasky (2005) highlighted that powerlessness and vulnerability could compel teachers to implement policies only by conformity, but not because they found them significant and useful.

Teacher responses and engagement strategies depended on school and policy contexts in which they worked. Findings demonstrated that teachers deviated from learner-centered ways to teacher-centered methods. Contextual aspects that prompted this action included time constraints versus congested syllabi; lack of teaching resources; overcrowding classrooms, and little space left for teacher movements. These limitations were argued that they weakened teacher-learner classroom relationships and interactions (Kelchtermans, 1996; Schneider, 2003). Teachers employed the marking strategy to cope with big class groups of involving learners in self- or cross-marking activities to help them finish marking learners' written work and give feedback in time as demanded.

Another essential finding of compromising the learner-centred methods in favour of traditional teaching indicated that teachers admitted scooping up learners in large groups and preached especially when teaching unobserved during weekends or after hours. Equally important, teachers taught to the objectives because they fixed the lessons to the basic competencies and taught the content in behaviourist rather in constructivist terms. Behaviourist methods contradicted the learner-centered education because it specified the content and subjected it to be presented in narrow and constricted terms that limited extensive learning (Tabulawa, 2013); they also promote conformity (Burger, 2018).

Moreover, the pedagogic anomalies were dealt with differently depending on individual and school conditions. Insufficiency of textbooks compelled teachers to carry available textbooks from class to class or summarise the main facts for duplication though was not a reliable solution. However, brave teachers pressed their school managements to buy textbooks from the school development funds. Furthermore, findings also indicated that teachers chose to ignore or teach topics in theoretical terms without practical demonstrations as recommended due to the absence and inadequacy of teaching materials and equipment. The similar finding came out for sensitive and explicit topics that they were either skipped, taught in superficial terms without providing deep information to the learners, or referred to 'others' who felt comfortable to teach them.

To cope with insufficient space, time, overcrowding and equipment teachers opted to engage learners in group more than individual work. Nevertheless; many working groups due to overcrowding, little classroom space available, and insufficiency of materials and equipment slowed down the speed of work. This was because they could only work with few groups of learners at a time. However, remaining groups were taken care of in the afternoons to catch up with practical activities. The knowledge gap detected between the learning content of consecutive grades was provided through compensatory teaching as a way of providing missing information to help learners understand new work. It also came out that teachers found it difficult to contextualise the subject content as it required a high degree of creativity and innovation skills to find similar examples and practical work to convert the unfamiliar into familiar and interesting experiences. The problem was aggravated by the limited or absence of resources and equipment at schools.

Findings demonstrated that teacher influence to change inconveniences and problems which emanated from school, home or community situations was limited; instead, they increased stress and frustration. Despite that, it was teachers who dealt with all the anomalies caused such as learner absenteeism, inability to concentrate in classrooms due to shortage of food, and hunger. As Kelchtermans (1996) indicated, factors such as home situations or conditions could not be controlled by teachers; they thus put them in a vulnerable and powerless position. To cope with challenges posed by the learner-centered curriculum, findings indicated that teachers engaged in mutual supportive activities within and beyond school borders for subject knowledge and skills as well as for teaching materials and equipment. They formed supportive groups at schools where they shared and discussed subject-related problems to find solutions.

The participation and involvement of parents and community members in school-related issues facilitated and made teacher work enjoyable thus; it heightened teacher motivation and commitment. However, non-participation, negative attitude, and negligence by parents and community leaders to use their power and influence for the betterment of home and community situations for effective teaching and learning also largely discouraged and disappointed teachers. Signs of disrespect from parents and communities had a great impact on the emotional and psychological aspects of teachers that could lead to low morale and commitment.

### **8.3.3 Factors influenced teacher behaviour and action**

This thesis aimed to describe and understand how the diverse circumstances of the individual, educational, social, cultural, historical, political and religious contextual backgrounds impacted on teacher sense-making on policy implementation by teachers. It aimed to address the causing factors that prompted teachers to behave and act the way they did in responding to the changes that came along with the learner-centered education policy. Findings again indicated that the sense-making thereof was influenced by individual and contextual factors.

The main individual factor that caused teachers to act as they did was the mismatch between policy demands and teacher beliefs, expectations, morals and values. Teachers found themselves in inferior, vulnerable positions with minimal authority to control learners because of democratisation, critical thinking and active participation policy (LeeFon et al., 2013; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016). This created tension and negative emotions as they observed their core beliefs and knowledge become threatened and intimidated, so as their power and prestige undermined by their subordinates due to the abolishment of corporal punishment (Smith & Amushigamo, 2016).

This is in line with the assertion by Tabulawa (2013) that the relationship existed in the child-rearing practices in Africa including all the formal education systems that prevailed in the Namibian contexts namely: the missionary and colonial, which strengthened the culture of domination and subordination of children since they were all promoting the universal and phrase of “spare the rod and spoil the child” (p.52). Most teachers who were expected to implement changes have been born, raised, educated, trained and started their teaching career in the so-called colonial apartheid era and content-based teacher-centred education. In the same sense again, teachers as children were raised in “rigid, domineering and one-sided

child-adult relationships” (p.102) both at home and school. They also came from the background of black education characterized by inferiority, teacher-centeredness, behaviourist, positivist, memorization, rote learning and punitive discipline (Jansen, 1995; Nekhwevha, 1999; O’Sullivan, 2004b). As students, teachers were neither accorded freedom nor cultured to think critically which caused them to internalise and accept their lived social structures as “subjective reality which in turn informed their habits of thought and positively oriented towards their society’s authority structures” (Tabulawa, 2013 p. 92). As a result, they supported the cultural image of a deficit system as they took these cultural norms to their classroom and school situations through the engagement with the teaching methods by reproducing the same stiff actions and practices in which they were educated. Therefore, what teachers hold would likely be an “immunological condition” which could serve as a rejecting tool for accommodating an unfamiliar organ (Tabulawa, 2013), which in this case is a different unusual approach.

According to Handal and Herrington (2003), such incompatible beliefs and values, and their associated emotions were the potential barriers in the enactment of policy changes. Due to this historical-cultural background, critical and challenging questioning by learners would be an insult to teachers. Unruly behaviour of stubbornness and ignorance due to too much freedom of speech and power accorded to learners would pose as a big insult to teachers who were raised in stiff, authoritarian child-adult contexts (Gibbons et al., 2017; Lawson et al., 2018; LeeFon et al., 2013; McNeill et al., 2016). Therefore, the adoption of learner-centered education policy had to be considered in a careful manner in terms of its applicability in different contexts (Tabulawa, 2003; Vavrus et al., 2011).

Another finding indicated that the presence of pregnant school girls in classrooms contradicted with the cultural beliefs and norms of teachers; which thus caused the feelings of discomfort and uneasiness to some teachers. According to the Oshiwambo tradition, a young girl had to undergo female initiation called “efundula” or “olufuko” which was a rite of passage into adulthood where they were considered ready for marriage and procreation (Becker, 2004; Loeb, 2015). In olden days, a young girl who got pregnant and a young man impregnated a girl before the *olufuko* rituals were performed, were considered as a taboo. Both lovers, male and female, were captured by the entire village, covered with grass and straw and burned alive (Loeb, 2015 p.236; Nghitongo, 2013; Yamakawa, 2007, p.70). After the burning practice was ended, girl victims were still subjected to harsh, embarrassing and humiliating treatments such as discrimination, insults and abuse including sand thrown on

them because they were a disgrace to themselves, families and society (Nghitongo, 2013; Yamakawa, 2007, p.70). Despite the elimination of the practice and Christianity teachings of forgiveness; stereotype that girls who got pregnant before the olufuko ritual or marriage were loose and wayward were still held; and thus, their presence in the school was not considered as a good example for others. The ideas above indicated teachers' inclination to protect and maintain the existing system as they tried to integrate the reform ideas into their communal practices (Spillane et al., 2002).

Equally important to the above was the teachers' perception that the policy of learner pregnancy was doing more damage than it was fixing the existing problem. This observation was confirmed by Kapenda (2012) who posited that the policy was encouraging than discouraging teenage girls and mothers, since it did not challenge them to be responsible for their sexual behaviour and actions. This was interpreted as such because all the burdens were shifted to teachers and parents, leaving the negligent teenagers carefree individuals. Hence, teachers felt the need for the policy to be revisited and revised to include prerequisites that challenge the irresponsible sexual behaviour which could possibly press learners to minimise the problem.

The other finding highlighted the tension between the policy demands; and personal and cultural beliefs, norms and values; protection of own emotions, self-identity, self-image and reputation within the school and the entire outside community (Newman, 1998; Spillane et al., 2002). This was indicated by some teachers who found certain topics too sensitive and not age-appropriate for learners. Bialostocka (2017) emphasized that culture is a guideline about what is right and wrong, and consequently influences our choices and decisions through culturally defined rules of behaviour and communication. Sexuality issues were still considered as taboos in specific cultural groups in terms of language of conversation, gender and age. The discussion thereof in classrooms between teachers and learners might have a negative impact on teachers and subsequently a feeling of discomfort, uneasiness and embarrassment (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). This would press some teachers to overlook, teach topics superficially or invite teachers who were comfortable to do it. This revealed that teaching was dictated by aspects such as personal identity, socio-cultural and historical working contexts of teachers.

This was because information is only considered knowledge once it was filtered, accepted and found relevant and meaningful within the community. As Weick et al. (2005) asserted,

teacher image and identity has been a matter of social construction, depending on how others perceived and labelled them. Therefore, what and how they taught influenced how they were to be perceived and understood by others inside and outside the school. Being known by learners and the community as teachers who explicitly teach learners what even their parents could not tell them would put the public in the position to question their morals and values. The positions that teachers held and the roles such as being parents, spouses, church or community elders, coupled with the respect and prestige they enjoyed in their religious and social communities served as stumbling blocks for them to do things as intended.

Moreover, reasoning associated with values, morals as well as with feelings and knowledge might have affective costs to self-image which could work against the adoption of the reform and thus its implementation (Spillane et al., 2002). It was also related to the emotions that teachers lived, experienced, expressed, and felt at personal levels within their families, school and cultural settings (Zembylas, 2004). Policy demands that pressed for the behaviour and actions that would cause negative perceptions by others would likely lead to negative reactions with the intention to protect own image and identity. Hence, emotions have been shaped and influenced by the cultures and social conditions of the individuals (Spillane et al., 2002).

Another finding suggested that the teaching atmosphere was riddled with fear, uncertainty and insecurity. Teacher behaviour of withdrawing from reprimanding and applying disciplinary measures to learners was driven by feelings of fear and uncertainty (Blignaut, 2007). Policies such as the repeal of corporal punishment were accompanied by jail threats and intimidations which evoked fear in teachers, while concurrently empowered and encouraged learners to behave in a contemptuous and irresponsible manner towards teachers. Fear has incapacitated, disempowered and weakened teachers (LeeFon et al., 2013; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016) as they were uncertain of the effective and acceptable strategies to use to discipline misconducting learners.

The study indicated that teachers strived to raise learners' academic achievement to meet accountability demands to protect their professional credibility and reputation because the national high-stakes examination results were published to the public in national newspapers resulting in the shaming or naming of the underperforming teachers, principals and schools (Tabulawa, 2013). In addition, this was coupled with the desire to be recognised and acknowledged as competent professionals through awards and promotions (Buchanan, 2015;

Coburn et al., 2016). The demands and challenges posed by the teaching policy and subject content forced teachers to move out of their comfort zones to seek for assistance from co-teachers, and in that way collaborations and team work were strengthened (Buchanan, 2015; Jenkins, 2017; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015).

Teachers used contextual factors around them to make sense of their reactions. It was evident that school conditions were not compatible with the learner-centered education policy. Teachers did what they did because the social and physical conditions at schools were not compatible with the demands of the learner-centered education policy. While policy was designed to be implemented in spacy classrooms with a reasonable number of learners to work in groups, the actual situation at schools was entirely opposite. The physical circumstances of classrooms were not adjusted accordingly to enable its implementation, hence the incompatibility (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). All teacher efforts and responses were dictated by the present conditions at schools. As Ekundayo (2010) stated, teachers and learners could be discouraged by factors such as unattended and unmaintained physical amenities and conditions in schools.

The study found out that the goal of access to education had been fast achieved than other goals, and the imbalances of the past were not satisfactorily addressed. It was evident that schools had the shortage or inadequacy of resources such as textbooks, and teachers were still struggling not very much different from the way they did before independence. It showed that the education goal of access in terms of enrolling every Namibian child in school was fast implemented, while the delivery of educational services in the region needed improvement (O'Sullivan, 2004b). This was indicated by the progress of education equity goal regarding fairness and equality to providing infrastructure and resource materials that has been relatively slow to ensure quality education in schools (Awe, 2007; Awe & Kasanda, 2016; Erixon Arreman, Erixon, & Rehn, 2016; Kapenda, 2008; Mbangula, 2010; Ndemuweda, 2011). Besides, the school development funds could not afford buying the teaching and learning needed as the financial status of parents and school communities were too low to meet the demands (Hamunyela, 2008; National Planning Commission, 2008).

The historical and political viewpoints of teachers influenced their emotions and the way they interpreted things (Beijaard et al., 2004; Pajares, 1992). This study focused on teachers who taught extensively before independence, who experienced apartheid education and went through hardships. They were personally involved in the struggle in different ways and

suffered during war and struggle times. Findings indicated the emotions felt by teachers regarding the current pace at which the rural schools were provided with infrastructure and teaching resources. They understood that rural schools were discriminated against as the government took too long to reach out. If the government were to intervene, much damage had already been done that could not be fixed as many learners were already in streets languishing in poverty and unemployment conditions. One would understand the reason why they got disappointed and stressed because their dreams and expectations regarding education after independence were not realised. It seemed that what they expected and dreamt of was far from being achieved.

The nature of the syllabi and high-stakes examination question papers demonstrated another mismatch with the learner-centered education policy. Syllabi were designed around behavioural norms that included the atomisation of knowledge, with pre-designed basic competencies to be achieved in narrow terms, tight specified content, and the pre-determined lesson outcomes in measurable behavioural ways. In the same vein, high-stake examination question papers demanded for memorisation of facts, which were all the main features of the condemned traditional approach. Both features motivated and encouraged teachers to plan their lessons around fixed basic competencies, stressing on facts and content desired to answer the examination questions (Tabulawa, 2013).

Another reason emanating from the study suggested that teachers resorted to traditional teaching method because they were not prepared to implement the new teaching policy. This concurred with Mbangula (2010) that many teachers who were currently in the service were not prepared for learner-centered education implementation. Failure to do so implied that the sense of dissatisfaction as well as the ownership of change were never created in them at the introduction of the new policy. Evidence from the findings indicated that when they were teaching, unobserved teachers used lecturing and preaching methods. This indicated that change was not owned by the teachers, but rather imposed (Tabulawa, 1997; 2013) to be implemented via instrumental action (Cho, 1998; Tabulawa, 1997). In addition to the above, resorting to traditional methods could also be caused by the lack of or insufficient support from regional experts in their classrooms because, as stated by Bantwini (2010), teachers who were not supported got disappointed and confused easily as their perceptions of curriculum implementation got tarnished. Furthermore, teacher learning opportunities were not successfully maintained, and on-going support and training were not constantly made



available to help shape and adjust their attitude, knowledge and beliefs towards new policy for effective implementation.

## **8.4 Concluding Remarks**

The study focused on the experiences and responses of experienced teachers. It foregrounded the importance of teacher sense-making which involved experiences and responses in the curriculum reform process. Teacher experiences are critical in the process of sense-making because the kind of impression that any curriculum reform gives to teachers strongly influences their perceptions and responses of its implementation. This study investigated the underlying ideas and philosophies of the adopted learner-centered education policy to determine if they were compatible with the dominant beliefs and trends of teachers in one of the Namibian contexts, the Ohangwena region. It was evident that conflicts and incompatibilities existed between the two, which created an internal tension within teachers (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Ertmer, 2005; Pajares, 1992). The personal and emotional events encountered by teachers day-to-day induced unpleasant feelings of uncertainty and humiliation in teachers.

The study gave more insight and expanded the understanding about teacher cognition, that is, how they make sense of their experiences and emotions and consequently how the sense-making influences the decision-making of their responses of the curriculum reforms. The study revealed the school background truths and daily realities of teachers which were seldom reflected in many studies. It also highlighted the individual and working aspects that enhanced and restricted teacher attempts to meet the curriculum demands as expected in schools. It is hoped that the emerged findings will help develop cognizance that challenges the perspective of teachers as programmed and non-judgmental “instruments” of implementation, but encourages the fundamental ‘humanisation’ view of implementing agents as thoughtful and emotional beings (Aoki et al., 1983; Kelly, 2009).

The study aimed to benefit teachers, school managers, parents and all educational stakeholders at higher levels. It intends to advance the understanding of what it means to be a teacher and teaching in the context of reform. Furthermore, the study contributes to intervention efforts towards peace and positive harmony between the working life of teachers and the technicist factors. The underpinning of teacher voice and sense-making of the learner-centered policy by this study revealed the humaneness of teachers in the implementation process through inner judgments, sentiments and ideas they make. The study foregrounds that

how the learner-centred education policy is translated and practised by teachers is not only a matter of technical factors; however, it also depends on teacher interpretation as determined by experiences, moral beliefs, values, and emotions.

The study underlines the importance and essence of individual, cultural and historical backgrounds in the sense-making process and thus their essence in the enactment of the policy. The study highlighted mismatches and inconsistencies existing between some demands posed by the learner-centered education policy and teacher beliefs, expectations and existing knowledge. The demands included the repeal of corporal punishment, freedom of speech, learner pregnancy policy and the teaching of topics which are culturally considered as “taboos” or sensitive. These policies were blamed for contributing to the escalation of learner misbehaviour and disrespect of teachers and parents; and consequently, to the promotion of teenage pregnancy (Kapenda, 2012). The mismatch acts as an “immunological condition” (Tabulawa, 2013) which made it difficult for the teachers to accommodate an unfamiliar tissue which is, the learner-centered education policy. Incompatibilities between what is believed and what is experienced generated negative emotions such as discomfort and uneasiness; and as Schmidt and Datnow (2005) assert, emotions and sense-making are important determinants of teacher behaviour in reforms. As teachers observe their core beliefs, knowledge, values and morals are threatened and intimidated; tension and negative emotions are generated, resulting in powerlessness and vulnerability as they feel undermined by their subordinates (Gao, 2008; LeeFon et al., 2013; Schweisfurth, 2011; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016). Core beliefs, morals and values emanate from cultural, religious, historical and political backgrounds held by teachers which inform and direct their responses and practice (Beijaard et al., 2004; Pajares, 1992). They guide the decision-making taken by teachers on how to approach, for example, sensitive topics (Bialostocka, 2017). As emphasised by Spillane et al. (2002) and Weick et al. (2005), being a teacher and teaching is not a single issue; rather it is a social undertaking involving others, inside and outside the classrooms. Lasky (2005) and Weick (2005) also assert that how teachers respond and practice, say for example, teaching and discussing prohibited topics in class with minors might influence the perceptions of others and kind of ascriptions they make towards them. The manner teachers are perceived by others inside or outside the schools has the potential to stabilise or destabilise them, because it could lead to the questioning of their moral integrity (Kelchtermans, 1996; Weick et al., 2005).

The interpretation and decision-making of teachers regarding their actions and behaviour in different situations is heavily reliant on and shaped by past experiences, knowledge, beliefs and emotions. For example, some teachers choose to refrain by ignoring misconduct problems from learners, while others choose to reprimand them. This reaction involved negative emotions such as fear, uncertainty and insecurity (Blignaut, 2007; Smith & Amushigamo, 2016) from unpleasant experiences; knowledge that they are not protected by the law; and deep hidden beliefs and expectations that it was the duty of the parents and caretakers to teach their children the basics from home. Moreover, the concept discipline has become too broad for teachers along with the understanding that no disciplining strategies are put in place to guide them without implications. The decision to refrain from disciplining learners taken by some teachers can be interpreted as a demonstration of teachers against the policy. According to Tabulawa (2013), silence or refusal to participate in activities does not necessarily indicate powerlessness; however, it is a voice to resist and exercise one's power. Therefore, teacher withdrawal or silence can be interpreted as a passive resistance to insults by their subordinates and a mode of exerting power over some policies.

The contextual background of teachers in this study indicates some elements of imperialism in its own way because they came from the context of patriarchal hegemony where adult-child, male-female or powerful-powerless relations are definite. Knowing their powerless position to change or reject change would also oblige teachers to conform with some policies, despite that they found them conflicting with their cultural beliefs and values (Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005). Being raised in a rigid one-way child-adult power relationship where the questioning of orders by elders was not allowed; teachers thus, would opt to conform and play along (Cohen, 1994; Harber, 1997; Nyambe & Griffiths, 2001; Ralaingita, 2008; Tabulawa, 2013). Sense-making does not only develop from individuals and families, but also from social contexts. Complying or doing things against one's cultural beliefs, morals and values demonstrates the hegemony of technical rationality of the learner-centred education and the promotion of the one-size-fits-all approach which marginalise and discriminate against the co-existence of other cultural values. It also poses a question of whether some cultures are super or better than others to dictate what and how others from different diversities should learn (Tabulawa, 2013). Thus, applying a model in a different context is a risk similar to resisting imperialism with another imperialism. Proposing any change suggestion should be made from within rather than imposing it because it would cause conflicts and clashes. This is because, every cultural context has its own problems to

deal with, which may not be familiar with strangers; hence the need to study and know the context first before any change proposal is implemented.

In as much as teachers need to bracket and not influence learners with their beliefs, morals and values in the teaching-learning process, it is very demanding to dissociate them from their identity. Although such beliefs, values and morals appear to be boring, something of the old-school and no longer relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they however, are very deep-rooted and lie at the core of teachers' cultural beliefs (Pajares, 1992). This study recommends ongoing learning opportunities where teachers share different experiences related to the problematic areas where they are exposed to sensitive, yet challenging scenarios that engage them in debates, scrutiny and question their existing beliefs. As they become more discontented from within regarding the existing practice, the conversion or gestalt shift from old to new ideas starts (Ertmer, 2005). Equally important is to address the problem in training workshops to encourage and help teachers understand that culture is dynamic, and it is not wrong to adopt other cultures, though they have to retain their core standpoints. There is also a need to understand that as educators, they should not stagnate but move along with the flow of development. However, patience is needed for them as owners of change to filter and apply change themselves when they find it meaningful and relevant to make it their own; otherwise it becomes an imposed change only accepted at face value.

Other inconsistencies highlighted in the learning content involved the contextual bias which was found discriminating rural learners and put a greater task on teachers to convert the unknown to the known in the context of limited resources; and the existence of knowledge gaps in the learning content of junior grades and the next. This study calls for teacher participation in the development process of the curriculum as well as equal and fair representation of all the Namibian contexts in the regular review of subject syllabi. Consultations, feedback and suggestions from teachers who are the principal implementers must serve as guiding dynamics on which any change should be based.

The study highlighted the need to align the design of subject syllabi, and the nature of examination question papers to constructivist assessment rather than behaviourist ways which do not match with the learner-centered teaching approach. Both designs encourage teachers to pin their lessons around pre-set basic competencies, stress and recite facts needed for reproduction (Tabulawa, 2013). Teaching in this way is motivated by the nature of the syllabi which is designed around behavioural norms; and by the nature of high-stakes examination

papers which demand for the memorisation of facts. Furthermore, the awarding criteria to recognise and acknowledge the best performers should consider the nature of approach used by the performer throughout to produce the results. However, this requires ongoing and consistent monitoring and observation by the supervisors.

Furthermore, the thesis foregrounds that the physical conditions of rural schools are not compatible with the learner-centered education implementation (Thompson, 2013) and this greatly discourages teachers. The study thus, underlines the importance and urgency to address the imbalances of the past so that all the conditions of all rural schools in the country can be stabilised in terms of physical facilities and resources. The study reveals that the goal of access to education which allows for admission and entrance of every Namibian child to school has been achieved much faster than the goal of equity which aims for fairness and equality to provide infrastructure and resource materials. This concurs with O'Sullivan (2004b) that the participation increase of learners in education has been achieved to a greater extend; while aspects such as the delivery of education services, and support and provision of advisory services needed improvement in some regions. Given their political and historical backgrounds, teachers perceived this ever-going imbalance as a negligence and discrimination act against rural schools and their surrounding communities wasting rural learners in the streets. As Carl (2012) warned, implementation of reforms carried out in unstable political or economic circumstances tended to be less successful because they impede implementation. Setting of national examination papers for all learners in the same grade but taught under dissimilar contexts of resource allocations and expecting them to compete with those taught in resourceful contexts, is considered as an unfair practice by the rural teachers. Therefore, the study suggests that it is high time after independence, that the speed and occurrence of supply at schools be improved to balance the two goals of education namely, the goal of access and the goal of equity for quality education. The study found this imbalance as the major cause of overcrowding in classrooms as many learners were admitted in schools beyond school capacities. The study urges the Ministry of education in collaboration with the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication to provide and ensure that all the rural schools are supplied with adequate and relevant infrastructure to cater for the school needs. This implies that all schools must have access to convenient roads, strong internet signals, and communication means.

Teachers in this study echo very poor school conditions regarding infrastructure, communication as well as the shortage of teaching resources. Unavailability of laboratories

and libraries indeed impedes teaching in many ways, so as the inadequacy of classrooms. The provision of infrastructure and teaching resources at schools increases the number of classrooms and reduces overcrowding of learners in classrooms for effective teaching. The availability of hostel infrastructure is also a necessity at senior secondary schools as many learners are not from the local area and need accommodation. The hostel environment protects learners from outside distractions such as alcohol and drug abuse and other negative influences from the outside environment because they are supervised and taken care of by teachers. It also improves their concentration on school work. Complementary to the provision of infrastructure and resources to schools is the innovation that goes beyond creativity from the side of school actors. This is achieved through liaisons within and outside their communities to look for assistance through donations and sponsorships for school development purposes.

The study highlights the need for teacher professional support provision to be designed as an ongoing and lifelong process for assisting teachers up to classroom levels. This assists teachers to develop self-confidence in implementing new innovations. The study highlights the dire need to re-address the intentions behind the adoption of the learner-centered education policy amongst teachers and to find alternative ways that synthesise and harmonise the two approaches to develop teaching satisfaction that would lead to the owning of change. Also, where it deems possible, to reduce the paperwork so that teachers can use much of their time concentrating on teaching and preparing of lessons and professional advancement.

Locally, the study foregrounds the need to mobilise and sensitise parents and communities on the importance of education by community leaders and other significant figures. The study reveals that only a few parents and community members participate and support teachers in school programs; which is considered as having a direct influence on the attitude of learners towards learning and leading to the low morale and commitment of teachers (Buckley et al., 2005; Hamunyela, 2008). The understanding of parents regarding their position and the essence of their role as education stakeholders would assist them to support teachers in the education of the Namibian child. The study acknowledges that other factors also contribute to the escalation of learner misbehaviour and disrespect of teachers; however, it does not undermine the potential impact that parental education and guidance can make from home. It strongly believes that the later minimises learner misconducts because it can shape the behaviour and attitude of learners at school.

## **8.5 Significance of the Study**

Most studies conducted on policy implementation have highlighted several issues lying behind the ineffective implementation of the learner-centered education in Namibian schools. Learner-centered issues negotiated included its conceptualization and interpretation; practical implementation guidelines in different disciplines; how it is implemented and the extent it is implemented; critical reflection practice; and how it is interpreted and practiced. Ineffective implementation was attributed to factors such as teacher limited capacity; lack of teacher preparation and insufficient training; limited classroom resources; teacher cultural perspectives; overcrowded classes; undisciplined learners; lack of teachers' personal experiences; and high learner-teacher ratios.

The originality of this study lies in its framework, the integrated cognitive sense-making, and its methodology of teacher life histories which have been seldom used by many studies. It contributes new knowledge to the scholarship of the rural and developing Namibian contexts. The study has identified the mismatch between policy and practice because it highlights the problem which captures the way teachers interpreted the curriculum messages and how it affected their implementation. It has thus, attempted to explore the underlying aspects in teachers' personal, professional, and socio-cultural lives believed to generate tension within the implementers of the learner-centered education policy. It has endeavoured to understand teacher reasoning and sense-making from the cognitive perspective and describe the extent of the influence such factors can facilitate or impede the interpretation and practice of the new curriculum changes. The value of this study indicates the bigger need to recognise the cognitive and reasoning aspects which underpin the sense-making process of implementation.

Further research on implementation of the learner-centered education reforms can focus on young teachers who have been educated and trained in the current learner-centered education curriculum after independence to determine whether their perceptions and responses align with teachers that participated in this study. The disagreement of ideas will indicate that virtuous progress towards the realisation of effective implementation of the new policy is underway, while the alignment of thoughts proves otherwise.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

This study originated from the need to address the challenges related to policy implementation to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes of learning in Namibian

schools. Teacher sense-making, particularly in the context of reform, is a critical element for effective implementation because it determines the extent and the type of understanding acquired by the teachers regarding practice. The type of experiences held by teachers is of utmost significance in the sense-making because it shapes their views and subsequently the behaviour and actions taken in practice. Hence, the importance in exploring the comprehensive and stretched experiences of the long-serving teachers and determining how their experiences shaped the responses towards the radical shift demanded by the learner-centered education policy. The value of this study lies in its contribution to the policy-makers and teacher support services which enable teachers facilitate positive sense-making, reasoning and behaviour. This exploration of teacher experiences and responses to the curriculum reforms provided insight on the impact that personal and contextual working aspects have in the teacher sense-making process towards effective implementation.



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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



22 October 2014

Mrs Vistorina VN Ndemuweda (210553640)  
School of Education  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1165/014M

Project title: An exploration of how teachers in Namibia experience and respond to the curriculum policy shift in their working lives

Dear Mrs Ndemuweda,

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 15 September 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
/ms

Cc Supervisors: Dr CNN Mthiyane and Prof VR Wedekind  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele  
Cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

### Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohuno@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohuno@ukzn.ac.za)

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## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM GATEKEEPER



**OHANGWENA REGIONAL COUNCIL  
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION  
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor Greenwell Complex Private Bag 88005 Eenhana Tel: 065 – 290 201 Fax: 065 -290 224

Enquiries: Magano Gaoses  
Email: [mcnotto@yahoo.com](mailto:mcnotto@yahoo.com)

9 October 2014

Ms. Vistorina Ndemuweda  
P.O Box 199  
Ohangwena  
Namibia

Dear Ms. Ndemuweda,

**Subject: Request for permission to conduct a study in Ohangwena Region.**

1. Receipt of your letter on the above subject matter is hereby acknowledged.
2. Permission is granted for you to carry out the research on "An exploration of how teachers in Namibia experience and respond to the curriculum policy shift in their working lives" in Ohangwena Region.
3. Research, such as this, has great potential to add value, as it is done with a view on getting a deeper understanding of how teachers experience and interpret their working lives in the context of policy changes.
4. It is very important that the research should not hinder the teaching and learning process at schools. Prior arrangements with the concerned schools need to be made noting that participation will be voluntarily.
5. It is in light of this that the Directorate salutes you for the initiative you have taken, and wishes you the best in your research.

Yours Sincerely,

**Sanet L. Steenkamp**  
Director: MoE  
Ohangwena Region



## APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR CONSENT FROM TEACHERS



### INFORMED REQUEST LETTER TO PARTICIPANT TEACHERS

P.O. Box 199

Ohangwena

01 December 2015

### SUBJECT: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Teacher

I am pursuing doctoral studies in **Education** at the **University of KwaZulu-Natal (RSA)**. My program requires that I conduct a research study in my area of specialisation which is, Professional Development. I am requesting you kindly to participate in the study titled: **“an exploration of how teachers in Namibia experience and respond to the learner centred approach in their working lives.”** The aim of the study is purely academic, which is to get a deeper understanding of how you experience and interpret your working lives in the context of curriculum reforms. I have identified you as one whose informed opinion can help facilitate this study. I believe that you have the potential and can provide me with valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this concept.

Participation will take place in the form of an individual or focus group interviews, and I would like you to be a participant. The interview session will not take more than an hour. It will be based on the interview schedule I have prepared. With your permission I will voice-record the interview to help me remember your views. The data will be anonymous i.e. it will not be linked to your name and will be used in my research report. Your identity in this project will be confidential and protected according to the code of ethics as stipulated by the **University of KwaZulu-Natal**. I also acknowledge your autonomy as an educator. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research without being disadvantaged at any stage, if it becomes impossible for you to continue to participate.

My supervisor is Dr. Nonhlanhla Mthiyane who can be contacted on +27 33 2606131 at the School of Education and Development, Pietermaritzburg campus. My contact number is +264813000013, and should you have any queries or questions you may like answered you may please contact me or my supervisor.

I will send a letter to your principal to inform him/her about my research project. The regional director, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, is aware and has already granted me the permission letter to conduct research in the region.

Sincerely yours

Vappa V N Ndemuweda

## FORM OF CONSENT

I ..... (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the attached document and the nature of the research project and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire without any negative consequence.

**Signature of participant**

**Date**

**Witness**

**Date**

**Please indicate the data collection activities you give your consent for:**

| Activity               | Yes | No |
|------------------------|-----|----|
| Narrative interviews   |     |    |
| Focus group interviews |     |    |
| Document reviews       |     |    |
| Voice recording        |     |    |

## APPENDIX D: NARRATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



### **Narrative Interview Schedule**

#### **A. Personal background**

1. Would you please tell me the story of your early life and upbringing?
2. What were your major family values and principles?
3. How were the roles of males and females, children and adults defined in your community?
4. What were the acceptable norms/manners when interacting with elders in your community in terms of deliberations and questioning their actions and orders?
5. Where and how were you initially trained as a teacher?

#### **B. Beliefs on education policy, teaching and learning**

6. What do you think is the purpose of education in Namibia?
7. How do you define the new policy of education, LCE? In which ways do you see it different/similar to TCE?
8. In which ways does the principles of the new education policy not match to your cultural norms, values and principles?
9. In which ways did you contribute to the reform of your subject curriculum/syllabus?
10. What do you believe is the good content of the subject syllabus/curriculum? (Do you think your subject curriculum cover all significant issues?)
11. Who do you think should control the learning environment?
12. What do you think should be the relationship of teacher and students?
13. What are the conditions for learners to learn effectively?
14. How do you define effective teaching?
15. Whom do you consider as an effective teacher? What are the conditions of effective teaching?
16. What is your definition of a good school and schooling? [How do you rate your own school? Why do you rate it that way?]

### **C. Experiences on practice**

17. Would you please tell me about the major general changes you have noticed/observed in education since independence?
18. What were the major changes you have observed in your subject (in terms of content, approach and assessment)?
19. How were (and still are) you prepared to face the changes? By whom and how often?
20. What challenges did (or still do) you encounter in implementing the new changes? How do/did you cope with them?
21. Do you, in anyway, find yourself under pressure to increase learner achievement and performance? By whom and how?
22. Do you, by any chance, find yourself not feeling comfortable to implement the new changes? In which ways and why?
23. Comparing the behaviour and attitudes of learners before and after independence, what difference did you notice? What explanation do you give to this change? [Do you, at times feel your power, rights, authority and prestige as a teacher being undermined by learners during interaction?]
24. What do you suggest should be done to improve the teaching and learning situation for the better?

### **D. Experiences on intensification, time and status**

25. Apart from teaching, what other roles and responsibilities do you have at school?
26. Do your roles and expectations leave you time to plan, mark and consult colleagues? Why? How do you teach to catch up with the outcomes of your subject curriculum?
27. Are you, in any way, pressured to teach facts and do practices that stress academic learning for examination purpose only?
28. Considering the number of learners, you have in your classrooms and the nature of required teaching strategies, do you think your school and your subject in particular get enough support to implement changes for effective teaching? Who supports you and how are you supported?
29. Would you please tell me about motivation incentives (for both teachers and learners) in your school, circuit or region? [Do they give awards to best performing teachers and learners? If so, how is good teaching and learning defined? What matters most, teaching process (how) or teaching product (how many passed)?]
30. Do you teach in order to get an acknowledgement? Why?

31. Do you as a teacher, in any way feel not respected by learners, parents, administrators, etc.? Why do you say so?

**I thank you!**

## APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



### Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. Would you please describe the reforms you have experienced in education in the past twenty years?
2. How was teaching-learning process like before independence? How is it now?
3. How do those reform you have described above affect/influence your teaching?
4. What challenges or problems, as a result of those changes, have you experienced in teaching?
5. How do you cope with those challenges? Do you think you are well equipped to face and deal with them?
6. Please tell me how the new teaching policy (LCE) was made known (communicated) to you.
7. In which ways do you see changes in teaching not in line with our personal, traditional and cultural values, knowledge and beliefs?
8. How do you describe the administrative paperwork tasks and demands that have been initiated recently? Do they leave you enough time to prepare and do marking?
9. What strategies do you use to catch up with your syllabus? Are you in any way pressured to teach facts and do practices that stress academic learning for examination purpose only?
10. Do you think your school and your subject in particular have/get enough resources (library, laboratory, classrooms, teaching materials etc.) to implement changes for effective teaching? Who supports you and how?
11. How are the relationships between teachers and management? In which ways do teachers assist each other? (Professionally, emotionally, socially etc.)
12. How do you see the behaviour of learners and the community at large towards learning, teachers and schooling as such?

**I thank you!**



## **APPENDIX F: EXTRACTS FROM TEACHER NARRATIVES**

### **Etuhole**

“I do not have a problem to finish my syllabus on time. Teaching this subject for quite a long time has made me not to take too much time to cover the syllabus. My teaching does not really depend too much on the textbook, but on the syllabus. If you depend on the syllabus, teach the basic competences as given, you will cover on time but if you teach the textbook you may end up not covering the syllabus on time. So, there is no need for me to teach facts and do practices for examination purpose. However, teaching a big number of learners, you may end up not completing activities on time because you will not be able to reach every learner on time and effectively. This big number of learners does not allow us to help learners individually. If you want to assist all, especially slow learners who need more time to grasp, you can only make use of remedial teaching during study time or during weekends...

In the past, most of our learners were disciplined, but once corporal punishment was abolished most of learners become undisciplined... as teachers find our power and prestige being undermined by the learners because you may tell a learner to say something but they are just stubborn or ignorant not feeling like responding to your question. You may tell a learner to stand up but they say: “No, I don’t want to stand up” and may talk about their right...right...right, it is my right!

I am a sport organiser, I participate in sport and I also involve learners in sport activities. I am also a school board member, we deal with cases related to learner misbehaviour or misconduct cases by any stakeholder at school, let it be teachers or workers. Time is a very limited resource we have. This new policy requires us to have too many subject files. Sometimes a teacher is no longer a teacher, is just an administrator. There is too much administration work therefore, instead of concentrating on your school work like teaching and learning, you are just busy with these many subject files. It is too time-consuming. Again, committees at school are also too many, you always have to come together in those committees. This uses up most of our teaching time.”

### **Panduleni**

“The males had to look after cattle while girls had to do the housework like pounding mahangu and others...Our parents were very strict, we were not allowed to stay out till sunset, and we had to make sure that before sunset we were back home otherwise you would be spanked. We were taught to obey and respect the elders.

When talking to elders we had to stand and listen, not just walk... we had to even sit down or stop whatever you were doing to give your full attention. A direct look in the eyes of an elder indicated that you were not properly brought up so we were told not to do that. Whenever we were instructed to

do something we did not have to ask why and how, we were just carrying out orders as we were told... there was no such a thing of questioning why me or how or when...

As teachers we feel undermined by learners and it is not a pleasant experience. We have noticed this in classroom mostly when we discuss certain issues with learners...you can observe that some learners totally disregard your knowledge and experiences as a teacher. They do not want to listen; may be this is also determined by the statuses. Some learners are daughters and sons of wealthy business people, or they are told and believe the teaching profession is poor or backward, and there is no way a teacher can be somebody in terms of financial status. So, some learners have that contempt that you are a nobody because you do not have expensive assets like cars. There are also some things that make learners feel grown up or mature. Some learners do things prematurely making them think and consider themselves to be in the same category as adults. For instance, a boy impregnating a girl in the same class will see each other as husband and wife, and they might consider themselves to know everything regarding sex.”

### **Iyaloo**

“I was trained at Ongwediva training Centre, the highest tertiary institution in that part of our country at that time. It was trouble, because our teachers or educators were boers, armed soldiers (omakakunya). It was time of war, they were coming to teach us in classrooms wearing their uniforms and guns on shoulders. When they said “do this” you had to do it because you were afraid of those guns, “who knew? They could shoot you.” When they came to class, they told us to take our textbooks and underline what was important ...you just underline because you knew it was the very important key point in that sentence. From there you go and memorize, even if you do not understand the meaning. That is how we were trained...

Regarding whether our school gets enough support to implementing changes for effective teaching, the answer is no. We find ourselves unable to cope because learners are too many. The average ratio is 1:45. One teacher accommodates 45 learners is impossible. For example, in languages marking an activity for composition and letters within two days for three class groups is impossible, you will not finish. That is why if you want to give a feedback you only give one composition and letter in a week, not more than two because it is impossible for marking... The ratio that we have does not even allow us to arrange chairs so that learners can sit down in groups, it is impossible. It is also difficult to control 45 learners within 40 minutes and to monitor and engage each learner in activities is quite difficult, unless the number of teachers is increased to minimise the teacher-learner ratio. We are really struggling. Such conditions can sometimes make us resort to teacher-centred methods because you cannot reach every child at all. Is very difficult in remote areas like this to use the learner-centred methods, you have to go back to teacher-centred teaching...

“They choose the best teacher by looking at their teaching product but not at the teaching process. For teaching to take place you can use any style of teaching. If you realise that when you use learner-centred approach your learners do not understand, why can’t you go with the next which is teacher-centred which makes your learners understand? It is better you go with that one as long as your learners can make it. Then you get your award since they do not emphasise on the style of teaching.”

## **Kanona**

“After Std. 8, the only two options which were primarily available, especially in this northern part of Namibia, was either going for teaching or nursing training. Therefore, after std. 8 I also went to Ongwediva training centre. It was called a training centre because of various programs which were run at that centre. Some students were doing vocational training; some were at the high school, while we were undergoing teachers’ training. That teacher training was only a two-year program. We were at our young age but did not have any further opportunities of training after the completion of that two-year course. That was the kind of “maximum or highest training” at that time, and we felt proud as we regarded ourselves well educated.

The most shocking was the kind of teachers who were training us, and I do not forget that experience. Some of them were soldiers ...teachers and soldiers at the same time... they came to class in full army uniform. They were transported to school by army vehicles and came fully armed to school... When we looked at them coming, it was like a military attack on school. ... They were all Whites.

...Positive things are always associated with the negative ones. Some learners are too young and are exposed to information that you feel is not yet of their age level. For example, when topics related to HIV are discussed, where you have to explain what are and how the STDs are contracted, I feel that some learners are given information that is above their age group. A learner who is in grade 8 for example, is already told not to have many sexual partners. This strange information is not easily digested by a learner of that age. It simply awakens their curiosity for the first time, after which they start asking questions. One question could be, ‘So I am now allowed to have one sexual partner?’ The topic prompts them to ask detailed questions about the condom. This makes me think that some topics are above some learners’ age. And if you think on the other side, sexual matters in our societies are hardly discussed in public like in the so-called developed societies in the West. Therefore, we always have the feeling that our children are exposed to strange cultural things.”

## APPENDIX G: EDITOR'S LETTER



**Barbara Mutula**  
Associate member

Membership number: MUT001  
Membership year: March 2018 to February 2019

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[www.editors.org.za](http://www.editors.org.za)

**04 June 2018**

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that the dissertation written by Vistorina Vapanawa Ndapandula Ndemuweda, titled '**An Exploration of How Teachers in Namibia Experience and Respond to The Curriculum Policy Shift In Their Working Lives**' was copy edited for layout (including numbering, pagination, heading format, justification of figures and tables), grammar, spelling and punctuation by the undersigned. The document was subsequently proofread and a number of additional corrections were advised.

The undersigned takes no responsibility for corrections/amendments not carried out in the final copy submitted for examination purposes.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Barbara", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

---

Mrs. Barbara L. Mutula-Kabange

Copy Editor, Proof reader  
*BEd (UBotswana), BSSc Hons Psychology (UKZN),  
MEd Educational Psychology (UKZN)*